The VERITIES of JESUS

DAVID JAMES BURRELL

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THE VERILIES OF JESUS

BY

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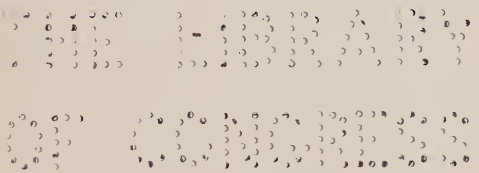

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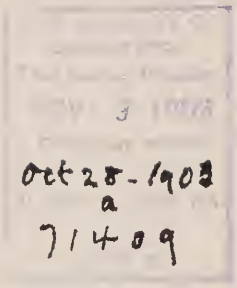

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PREFACE.

It would appear that in our study of the teachings of Jesus we have in some measure overlooked the significance of the word Verily. It occurs twenty-five times in its reduplicated form in John's Gospel and fifty times in its single form in the three synoptists. Attention is called to some suggestive facts:

First. The word thus rendered is found only in the discourses of Christ. The Apostles, though fully inspired to formulate and elaborate the truths which he proclaimed, nowhere make use of it. We infer that the word thus divinely copyrighted, as it were, conveys an intimation of singular authority, as of a divine seal, equivalent to a "Thus saith the Lord."

Other words (γάρ, δή που, μέν δέ, ναί, ὄντως and μέν οὖν) are thus rendered by the apostles: but Christ's verily is always *amen* (ἀμήν) and he alone uses it in this way.

Second. The word is one of special and peculiar emphasis. It corresponds in form and significance with the Hebrew *amen*, meaning "firm" or "trustworthy," which was the pledge-sign of God's covenant with his people. The addition of "I say unto you"

has precisely the value of a "Thus saith the Lord." This Verily is personified in Rev. iii. 14 as the Faithful and True Witness, from which it would appear that when Jesus uses the term he means "I give you a divine assurance of the truth and importance of what I now assert."

Third. The word is attached to every one of the fundamental facts of the gospel, and only to such. From this we infer that, while the teachings of Jesus were intended to touch every point in the circumference of human life, he intended to impress these particular truths with special emphasis upon us. He wasted none of his Verilies. There is a sufficient reason, as we shall see, for each one of them. In weighing, measuring and comparing truths we shall know where to put the emphasis when we thus discover where he placed it.

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The Verilies of Jesus.

I. REGENERATION.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. John iii. 3.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. John iii. 5.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. John iii. 11.

In a letter from Whitefield to Benjamin Franklin, dated 1752, occur these words: "As I find you growing more and more famous in the learned world I would recommend to your diligent and unprejudiced study the mystery of the new birth. It is a most important study, and, when mastered, will richly answer all your pains. I bid you, my friend, remember that One at whose bar we shall both presently appear hath solemnly declared that without it we shall in nowise see his Kingdom."

The reference is to the solemn words of Jesus addressed to Nicodemus: "*Verily, verily, I say unto*

thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God."—"*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*"—"*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that which we do know, and bear witness of that which we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.*" (John iii. 1–21.)

The first thing said about Regeneration is that it is a mystery. "Born anew?" What is that he saith? How can a man be born anew when he is old? We cannot comprehend. Will Christ attempt an explanation? Not he. As well seek to teach a butterfly the philosophy of the torn chrysalis. The fact is enough. Hark to the wind! It "bloweth where it will; thou knowest not whence it cometh and whither it goeth." The fact gives token of itself, in rustling leaves, in the fury of the tempest, in flowers that bend and waters that murmur at its passing by. Thus does the mighty work of God's Spirit in the soul manifest itself. Its *modus operandi* is unknown, but its results are seen in the blooming and fruitful deserts of the spiritual world. The new birth finds its demonstration in newness of life. "When God openeth the sluice of grace, the stream runneth through the whole man." All things are become new. There are new tastes, new principles of action, new habits of thought; all showing themselves, as wine through a crystal goblet, in the actions of the outer life. Yes, the new birth is a reality! How it comes, thou canst not

tell, but the fact is patent. Thou hearest the sound thereof.

Observe, also, this is a radical change. Radical it must be, for the corruptions of human nature are all from the blood-center. Let us look on a life-like portrait painted by a master hand, the full-length portrait of a sinner: "Full of all unrighteousness; fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; a whisperer, a backbiter, a hater of God; despiteful, proud and boastful; an inventor of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding; a covenant-breaker, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful!" Where will God begin to reform this man? Manifestly, at the heart. No outward furbishing will answer. There must be no putting of new wine into old bottles, or of new cloth upon an old garment. Blot out the portrait, and give us an angel clothed in white! For "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." All at once? Oh, no! Though the citadel be taken in an hour the reduction of the city is a life-long task. Regeneration is followed by santification; patient continuance in well-doing, the building up of character, the continual growing to the full stature of a man.

Observe, again, there are diversities of operation though the same God worketh all in all. The wind sometimes advances with tempestuous power, in fierce

swirls and onslaughts, uprooting the oaks and piling the billows into foaming crags; at other times it breathes as an evening zephyr, cool from caverns of the north, or laden with the perfume of distant gardens. Saul of Tarsus must needs be blinded with a dazzling light; but the penitent beholds the heavens dark as midnight. Our God is an infinitely versatile God. He is not limited to any inflexible plan. In his visible handiwork there are nowhere marks of uniformity. No two rubies or diamonds are precisely alike. Thus it is with all God's jewels. He hath diversities of operation. To blind Bartimaeus he says, "Receive thy sight"; the eyes of another he anoints with clay; a third is required to wash in the pool of Siloam. So variously does light find its way into the chambers of the soul.

Yet underlying this diverse experience is the same invariable fact. By Regeneration is always meant the conquest of the entire man. It is not the *repairing of a defect* in the soul; it is the upbuilding of a new temple on ashes and dust, a new temple wherefrom the old spirits of passion and lust are departed, a temple fit for the indwelling of the Spirit. Regeneration is not reform; it is "a gain-birth," as Wickliffe called it. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; hopes, motives, appetites, all are become new! It is *palingenesia*. It is a resurrection from the dead: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

Observe, again, Regeneration is wrought by divine power. There is no room for co-operation at this point. It is a birth *anothen;* that is from above. "Not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit." Could the dead Lazarus, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, do aught toward his own quickening? No more can they who are dead in trespasses and sins. God speaks, "Come forth!" and they arise in newness of life. Thus are we born again, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Can it be imagined that a soul should be self-begotten? Who can estimate the distance between death and life? Stupendous change! If at the command of an audible voice Niagara were to stand still or to flow backward, that would be a trifling matter as compared with the arrest and reversal of the mighty forces of a human soul. Shall we presume to think ourselves a party to that miracle? Nay, in the overwhelming presence of omnipotence we bow like Elijah on Horeb with his face wrapped in his mantle. The power and the glory are God's. We are "born again," says Peter, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth." He is author and he is finisher. It is the Lord's doing and marvelous in our sight.

So then we can do nothing? Nay, the accomplishment of the work depends wholly upon us.

We can, if we chose, resist and effectually thwart the gracious purposes of God. "Come," whispers the voice of the spirit; and the soul may answer, "I will not!"

Or a man may invite the interposition of the Great Healer by placing himself as Bartimaeus did, in a receptive attitude, by the roadside when he passeth by. We can be willing to be saved; and there our part ends. We can actively will; and whosoever will shall be saved. "Rise! He calleth thee!" said the disciples to the blind man. Did he resent the assumption of exclusive power on the part of Jesus? Did he say, "I will not be healed unless I have somewhat to do with the healing, or unless the method is first explained to me?" Nay, it is written, "He, casting away his garments, rose and came." And to those who are like-minded, the whole treasure house of God is open.

"God is willing;
God is ready;
Doubt no more."

He waits to regenerate us. Let us fling open our doors and he will enter. He will do everything but force the door.

Be this understood; our posture in the work of Regeneration is not that of coefficiency with God; it is resistance on the one hand, or acceptance on the other; it is either refusal, or willingness to be saved. The former is death; the latter is life and immortality.

II.

CONVERSION.

Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of heaven.
Matt. xviii. 3.

The disciples of Jesus were looking for the establishment of a Kingdom, in which he was to assume the throne as Son of David and they to occupy places of honor and emolument. The keys had already been committed to Peter and the exchequer to Judas, and the others were naturally eager to be informed as to their respective places. Hence, not once, but again and again they inquired among themselves, "Which should be the greatest?" The Lord knew what was in their hearts, and his method of solving their difficulty was worthy of the Wonderful Teacher. He took a little child and set him in the midst, and said, "*Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*" (Matt. xviii. 3.)

In the Revised Version the rendering is, "Except ye turn." Observe, Conversion is not regeneration, and must not be confused with it. Regeneration is

wholly of God; while Conversion, which follows regeneration, is wrought by man in co-operation with God.

Our Lord was speaking to his disciples, who presumably had been born again. The thing that remained for them to do was to turn themselves from sin to righteousness. In the case of Nicodemus the emphasis was placed on regeneration because it lies at the threshold of the Christian life; but that accomplished, all the rest is "turning."

Regeneration is instantaneous, but Conversion is the work of a lifetime. When viewed from the Godward side, it is called sanctification, since in this matter the Holy Spirit co-operates with us.

Paul exhorts the Philippians, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who worketh in you." The emphasis is on the word "out." It is a mistake to think that salvation means only deliverance from the penalty of sin. This is merely the beginning, when the Lord says, "Go in peace: thy sins be forgiven thee." From that moment it devolves upon us to work out, to its uttermost, the great salvation which has been graciously begun in us. And this working out is the "turning," the "right about face," the making of character, the putting off the old man and putting on the new, the emerging from bondage, which, when consummated, means perfection, character, the full stature of manhood, "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

The most casual observer of the wonderful life of Jesus must have perceived his singular attitude toward childhood. His heart was wide open to the little people. This is ever a mark of the highest manhood. Of all the old masters, we love Murillo best, because he loved the children; and there is something fine and beautiful always in his portraiture of them, even when his subjects are beggar-boys. For a like reason, we incline to Longfellow among the poets; he loved the children, and they loved him. In his home at Cambridge they took great liberties with him, climbing over his chair and nestling in his arms. And this was his response:

> "I have you fast in my fortress,
> And will not let you depart,
> But will put you down in the dungeon,
> In the round-tower of my heart."

It is a pleasure to think of "Lewis Carroll," a professor of dry mathematics, turning aside from logarithms and the measurement of stellar distances to tell of little Alice in Wonderland. Now we should expect to find in Jesus, the ideal Man, the consummation of this manly grace; and we are not disappointed. Of all the great religious teachers of history, he alone is recorded to have opened his arms to the little ones, saying, "Suffer, the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me." When he took a little child upon his knee, and, looking around on his disciples, said, "*Verily*,

I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as this one, he shall in no wise enter therein," it was in line with his entire precept and example. He admonished the religionists of his time to give no offense to the children, saying, "It is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea." He identified himself with the welfare of the children, assuring his hearers that to give one of them a cup of cold water was like quenching the thirst of his own parched lips: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me."

But the interest of Christ in children goes deeper still. They were redeemed by his sacrifice. In Holman Hunt's picture of "The Flight into Egypt," the spirits of the murdered Innocents are represented as following in the wake of the little caravan; a sweet-faced company, awaking out of death with glad surprise in their faces and trooping after "like a trail of rosy clouds." In some of the earlier theological controversies we find the phrase *limbus infantum*, "the hell of children." What a nightmare is here! It is sometimes said that John Calvin asserted that there were "children in hell a span long." While it is admitted that Calvin inclined to a somewhat stern view of the divine justice, it is only fair to say that in all his voluminous writings there is not a word to warrant this accusation. And, indeed, it is an open ques-

tion whether any theologian, living or dead, can be held responsible for it. In any case, the truth lies at the very opposite, as set forth in the exquisite prophecy of Zechariah: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof." (Zech. viii. 5.)

The child on Jesus' knees is placed before us as an object lesson of Conversion. It is not to be inferred that children are sinless; else Jesus would not have proceeded to speak of them as "lost" and of himself as "seeking them." (Matt. xviii. 11–14.) But in childhood there are some characteristics of true greatness, which are well worthy of our imitation: such as (1) humility, (2) freedom from selfish and sordid ambition, (3) simple trust and confidence, (4) affection, (5) dependence, (6) teachableness, (7) an obedient spirit.

We are to "turn" away from the habit of sin toward these traits of character. This is Conversion, and this is the life-calling of a Christian. If we are disposed to "turn," in this manner, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities. God worketh in us; so that we constantly grow in grace. The end of Conversion is character. Our "turning" is growing, and growing brings us at length "unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. iv. 13.)

III.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH.

Verily, verily, I say unto you , He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment; but hath passed out of death into life. John v. 24.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. John v. 25.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled. John vi. 26.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven. John vi. 32.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life. John vi. 47.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. John vi. 53.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. John x. 1.

A man must repent before he believes in Christ. But repentance is not a saving grace; it has value only as it leads to something further on. The pain of a physical malady has no curative virtue; but it is this pain which inclines the patient to ring the doctor's bell. So John the Baptist goes before Christ with

his cry, "Repent ye!" since without repentance there is no adequate sense of need, nor disposition to accept Christ.

But the penitent is not saved; he has only discovered his need of salvation. He knows his malady; now how shall he be cured of it? To pause here is death. One in a sinking boat must not be satisfied with stopping the leak; the boat must be bailed out. A man head-over-ears in debt cannot recover his credit by resolving to pay cash in the future; he must somehow cancel his past obligations. If a penitent were never to commit another sin, the "handwriting of ordinances" would still be against him. The record of the past remains; and it will confront him in the judgment unless it be disposed of. The past! The mislived past! What shall be done about it?

This brings us to the matter in hand: What shall I do to be saved?

The one thing needful is to believe in Christ.

Our Lord at the beginning of his ministry said to Nicodemus, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have eternal life." And to make the matter perfectly clear to this learned rabbi, he resorted to the kindergarten method, using an object lesson: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up (that is, crucified); that *whosoever believeth* may in him have eternal life."

Our Lord puts the redoubled emphasis of his verily on this fact. To the deriding Jews he said, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me hath eternal life,*" adding with repetitive earnestness, "*Verily verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.*" (John v. 24, 25.) The reference in this instance is not to the final resurrection but to the resurrection here and now; that is, the spiritual quickening of those dead in trespasses and sin.

On another occasion, just after the feeding of the five thousand, he said to the same class of cavilers, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me not because ye saw signs but because ye ate of the loaves and were filled;*" and, when reminded of the manna, he continued, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, It was not Moses that gave you the bread out of heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread out of heaven. I am the living bread.*" Then he solemnly advised them of the necessity of appropriating him by faith, as the condition of salvation, on this wise, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth hath eternal life;*" and to make the matter still clearer, he added, keeping up the similitude of the loaves, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves.*" (John vi. 26, 47, 53.) By this we are given to understand that the sinner must appropriate Christ by faith

as one partakes of food: so that the life of Christ shall be assimilated and become, as it were, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone. To really believe in him is so to appropriate him that one may say, "I no longer live, Christ liveth in me."

The same truth is set forth with a like emphasis in the saying of Jesus, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door;*" and again, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not in by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.*" (John x. 1–7.) If this means anything it means that the sinner must be saved by believing in Christ, and that there is no other way.

But what is it to "believe in Christ?" It is easy to say, "Come to Christ," and, "Accept Christ," and "Believe in Him;" but just here occurs the bewilderment. These are oftentimes mere shop-worn phrases to the unsaved, however simple they may appear to those who have entered on the Christian life.

To believe in Christ is, first, to credit the historic record of his life. Once on a time he lived among men, preached, wrought miracles, suffered and died on the accursed tree. So far all will agree; but there is clearly no saving virtue in an intellectual acceptance of an undisputed fact.

It means, second, to believe that Jesus was what he claimed to be. And this claim is perfectly clear. To the woman of Samaria who sighed for the coming of

Messiah, he said, "I that speak unto thee am he." No reader of the Scripture can misunderstand his meaning, since the prophecy of the Messiah runs like a golden thread through all its pages from the protevangel, "The seed of woman shall bruise the serpent's head," to the prediction of Malachi, "The sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in its wings."

But, more than this, Jesus claimed that as Messiah he was the only-begotten and co-equal Son of God. He came forth from God and, after finishing his work, was to return to God and reassume "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was." It was this oft-repeated assertion which so mortally offended the Jews that was the occasion of his arrest on the charge of blasphemy. He persisted in his claim, and was put to death for "making himself equal with God." It must be seen, therefore, that no man can be said to believe in Christ who is not prepared to affirm, without demur or qualification, that he was what he claimed to be.

It means, third, to believe that Jesus did what he said he came into the world to do. And here again there can be no doubt or peradventure. He said: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." His death was to be the purchase-price of redemption. It follows that no man can truly believe in Christ without assenting to the fact that the saving power is in his death; as it is written, "The blood

of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin," and, "Apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." He came into the world to die for sinners, that they by his death might enter into life; he came to take our place before the bar of the offended law, "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, and with his stripes we are healed;" he came to "bear our sins in his own body on the tree;" and to believe in Christ is to believe that he did what he came to do.

It means, fourth—and now we come to the very heart of the matter—to believe that Christ means precisely what he says. He says to the sinner, "The Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins." He says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out." He says, "He that believeth *hath* eternal life." At this point belief means personal appropriation; acceptance, immediate, here, now. It is to make an end of doubt and perplexity and all questioning, by closing in with the overtures of divine mercy. It is to lay down one's arms and make an unconditional surrender. It is to take the proffered hand of the Saviour in an everlasting covenant of peace. It is to say, "*My* Lord, *my* life, *my* sacrifice, *my* Saviour and *my* all!"

But just here is where many hesitate and fail. They do not "screw their courage to the sticking point." They come up to the line, but do not take the step that crosses it. They do not summon resolution to

say, "I will!" They put away the outstretched hand, and so fall short of salvation.

The will must act. The prodigal in the far country will stay there forever unless his resolution cries, "I will arise and go!" The resolution is an appropriating act. It makes Christ mine; it links my soul with his, as the coupler links the locomotive to the loaded train. It grasps his outstretched hand; it seals the compact and inspires the song:

"'Tis done, the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's and he is mine!
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

"High heaven that hears the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear;
Till in life's latest hour I bow
And bless in death a bond so dear!"

The gift of God is eternal life; but the benefit of the gift is conditioned on our acceptance of it. The manna lies about our feet "white and plenteous as hoar frost," but it will not save us from famishing unless we eat it. The water gushes from the rock, but we shall die of thirst unless we dip it up and drink it. Christ on the cross saves no man; it is only when Christ is appropriated that he saves us. We must make him ours. We must grasp his extended hand. Luther said, "The important thing is the possessive pronoun, first person, singular." One of the early fathers said, "It is the grip on the blood that saves

us." Christ stands waiting—he offers life for the taking. Who will have it? The worst of sinners can make it his very own by saying with all his heart, "I will! I do!"

IV.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme.
Mark iii. 28.

If there is a sin which carries the soul beyond the reach of mercy, it behooves us to inform ourselves about it. The common view, which is quite incorrect, has led to much morbid introspection and reduced many to a state of religious melancholia. I know of such an one in the asylum to-day, sitting with his head in his hands, a wild light in his eyes, given over to utter despair under the conviction that God has forsaken him.

It is in order to inquire, at the outset, if there is any such thing as an "unpardonable sin." Here the Scriptures speak with no uncertain sound. It is referred to particularly in four passages:

"And every one who shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven." (Luke xii. 10.)

"*Verily I say unto you, All their sins shall be for-*

given unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." (Mark iii. 28, 29.) This is explained in the context; the Pharisees had referred the miracles of Jesus, which were wrought by the divine Spirit within him, to the influence of devils.

"For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." (Hebrews vi. 4–6.) Observe, the sin of apostacy, here indicated, is set forth specifically as an offense against the Spirit of God.

"If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request." (1 John v. 16.)

The testimony of the Scriptures in these passages is unmistakable; and, as believers in the divine word, we are bound to receive it. There is truth in the saying, "It is a sin to steal a pin," but it is obviously a greater sin to steal a purse or an inheritance. It was a sin for the rich farmer to take away the ewe

lamb of his humble neighbor, but it was a far greater for David to rob Uriah of his wife. In every court of justice such distinctions are made as grand larceny and petty larceny, murder and manslaughter: and corresponding penalties are inflicted. Much depends on motive and much on circumstance. The bell-ringer of Saint Germain, who, in 1572, gave the signal for the massacre of St. Bartholomew, was not without guilt; but guiltier was the captain of the Royal Guard, who led the assault upon the innocent Huguenots; guiltier still King Charles, who standing in the balcony of the Louvre on that fateful night, with arquebus in hand, looked down upon the scene of carnage, crying, "Kill! kill!" but guiltiest of all the mitred man at Rome who signed the death-warrant, and who, when the bloody deed was accomplished, struck off a memorial coin bearing on one side his own name and on the other, *Strages Ugonottorum.* And judgment is ever measured by desert, the harvest is according to the seed-sowing. Thus Jesus said, "That servant, which knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." (Luke xii. 47.)

Another fact to be considered is that all sins whatsoever are pardonable. This is the meaning of the cross: "The Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sin." He is able to save unto the uttermost all that will come unto him. Unto the uttermost!

No sin is beyond the reach of his pardoning grace. Sins that are scarlet are made white as snow. The penitent thief who had passed his life in deeds of violence was pardoned *in articulo mortis*. The Magdalene, from whom all pure women drew aside their garments, came to Jesus in contrition, and he forgave her all. Peter denied his Lord thrice, saying, "I know not the man!" and he went out and wept bitterly; and Christ restored him. Judas—alas! had Judas but known the infinitude of divine grace, his shame would not have led him to remorse, his grief would not have driven him to despair. Instead of rushing unforgiven into eternity through the dark gate of suicide, he might have thrown himself, with abandon of faith, upon the bosom of a gracious God. God, for Jesus' sake, is a great Forgiver. There is blood enough in the fountain, which he has opened for uncleanness, to wash away the sins of the guiltiest and most desperate. He blots them out as a hot stylus erases the inscription on a tablet of wax. He removes them from us "as far as the east is from the west." He casts them behind his back. He sinks them in oblivion; he remembers them no more against us.

Nevertheless, there is one sin which is unpardonable, in the necessity of the case. This statement is not so paradoxical as it seems. It is quite consistent with what we have been saying, as will appear from the following facts:

(1) The natural heart is biased against the truth and

goodness. It matters not whether the occasion of this bias be referred to the fall or to heredity ; the fact itself is indisputable ; and every man is sensible of it. The virus is in our blood : and, alas, we would not have it otherwise. We prefer to sin. No sin was ever yet committed except by preference, else it would not be sinful. No man can lay his finger on any guilty thing in his life of which he must not say, " I might have avoided it."

(2) This natural bias cannot be offered in extenuation of our guilt, since it is offset by the influence of the Holy Spirit. The good God has not left us to ourselves, but has put us under the power of his Spirit, who continually strives with us. He enables us to distinguish between right and wrong. He warns, remonstrates, persuades and urges us to avoid evil and do good. And when we sin, the Spirit exercises his most important function in offering us the benefit of pardoning grace. He puts us in remembrance of the things that Jesus said and did in our behalf. He stands ever ready to apply to our sinful souls the power of the atoning blood.

(3) But a man may harden his heart against the Holy Spirit ; and he who does this effectually is guilty of the unpardonable sin. There are three steps to death : One of them is referred to in Ephesians iv. 30 : " Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God ; " as when wayward children grieve a loving mother. The second step downward was indicated by Stephen, in his address to the

Sanhedrin: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye." We thus resist when we refuse to hear the Spirit's warnings and admonitions. The third and final step is designated in 1 Thessalonians v. 19: "Quench not the Spirit." A spark may be quenched in more ways than one. It may be stamped out, smothered, or merely left to die. The Holy Spirit may be effectually repelled by an impious affront like that of the Pharisees when they referred his work to Beelzebub; or his voice may be drowned in the confusion of Vanity Fair; or he may sadly take his departure after years of persistent neglect and inattention. Let the spark alone, and it will die; and with it, hope goes out forever.

It appears then that the unpardonable sin is the ultimate rejection of Christ as he is offered to the soul by the Spirit of God. While all sins are pardonable, it is obvious that the rejection of pardon is beyond remedy.

It is the closing by the soul itself of the only door into eternal life.

Our Lord refers to this sin of sins in his Parable of the Vineyard:

"There was a man that was a householder, who planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a wine-press in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into another country. And when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his

servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits. And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them in like manner. But afterward he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, this is the heir; come, let us kill him, and take his inheritance. And they took him, and cast him forth out of the vineyard, and killed him. When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do unto those husbandmen? They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those miserable men." (Matt. xxi. 33–41.)

If a man were a prisonor in a besieged city and were informed of a secret gate leading to freedom, how long would he hesitate to take advantage of it? We are shut up in the City of Doom; and there is one gate only to safety. The voice of the Spirit calls, "Escape for your life!" How long will you tarry? I put you in remembrance of the word which is written, "Seek ye Jehovah while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." There is no time to lose. Grieve not the Spirit; resist not the Spirit; quench not the Spirit. To-day is yours; to-morrow is God's.

V.

FREEDOM.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin. John viii. 34.

The teaching of Jesus, purporting to cover every phase and relation of human life, would be fatally incomplete were it silent as to Freedom. All great masters, philosophers, statemen have addressed themselves to this theme. We are not surprised, therefore, to find that Jesus has somewhat to say, that his saying is new and singular, and that he puts deep emphasis upon it. Here is the manifesto: "*Verily, verily I say unto you, Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin. And the bondservant abideth not in the house for ever: the son abideth for ever. If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*" (John viii. 34–36.)

A glance at the context will add to our interest in this saying. It was uttered on "the day of temptation," and was called forth by the hostility of the leading Jews. In the morning, as Christ was preaching to the early worshipers in the court of the temple,

they brought to him the woman taken in adultery; and flinging her down on the pavement they demanded, "Moses commandeth us to stone such: what then sayest thou of her?" This was the beginning of a running fire of questions which continued throughout the day.

Not a few were persuaded by the wisdom of Jesus exhibited in the protracted encounter of this memorable day, that he was really the Messiah. This was, however, a mere intellectual impression and of brief duration. When he said, "If ye abide in my word, *then* are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall made you free," they hotly resented it. "We are Abraham's seed," they said, "and have never yet been in bondage to any man; how sayest thus then, 'Ye shall be made free?'" This gave him the occasion of putting forth his doctrine of freedom.

I. He begins with a Verily, and adds manifold emphasis by doubling and sealing it, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you.*" Nor is this emphasis overdone, when we consider the tremendous part which the philosophy of freedom plays in human thought and experience.

II. The emphasis of the Verily is laid on the negative side of the proposition: namely, the bondage of sin. Nor is this without reason; since freedom is impossible until the captive feels the burden of his chains.

There is no bondage like that of sin. No galley-

slave toils at the oar as does the sinner under the lash of his hard taskmaster. And for what? "The wages of sin is death." The sinner pales at the mere mention of hell, yet works his fingers to the bone to win it!

The sinner is born in bondage. He inherits it. From the earliest impulse of childhood, his tendency is toward sin. Once this was called "the doctrine of original sin," and theologians were laughed at for entertaining it. But in these days it is called "heredity," scientists stand voucher for it, and to doubt or cavil would be quite out of harmony with the spirit of the age.

But the bondage of sin is more than a natural tendency: as time passes it develops into habit. There is a world of meaning in the word "habit:" it is derived from the Latin *habere*, to have or to hold. We speak of a suit of clothing as a "habit," because it holds or "fits" us. So sin as a habit, in process of indulgence, adjusts itself, so to speak, to the curves and angles of the soul. Presently it "fits like a glove:" or let us rather say, it fits like the shirt of Nessus, which could not be removed without taking flesh and blood with it.

So here is a great truth: "Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin." Every drunkard, every victim of any vicious habit whatsoever, responds to it with a yea and amen. And this is the confession which must be made before deliverance comes. The slave must feel as Paul did when he

cried, "Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" before his heart can utter the cry of the ransomed freedman, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Rom. vii. 25.)

III. Our Lord takes occasion in his discourse to correct a wrong definition of Freedom. The Jews thought of themselves as free by inheritance, "We be Abraham's children!" He might have retorted by reminding them of their bondage in Egypt, their captivity in Babylon, their subjugation by Rome; but he had a deeper purpose than merely to expose a sophism. He proceeded to show how, under the guise of religion, they were bondslaves to the letter while oblivious of the spirit of the law. They cherished the oracles, while making them of none effect by their traditions. They eulogized the prophets, while rejecting Christ, who was enshrined in prophecy. They made broad their phylacteries and wrote the law as frontlets between their eyes, while their hands were full of blood. They paid tithe of mint, anise and cummin, while withholding their hearts from God. Thus their religion was a mere superstition, and they, boasting of their freedom, were in real bondage. They were in Abraham's household like Ishmael the son of the bondwoman, not like Isaac the son of the patriarch's wife. (Gal. iv. 22–31.)

IV. Another spurious form of Freedom is exposed by the teaching of Jesus. There are those who hold

that liberty is license, or deliverance from restraint: as Milton says:

> "License they mean, when they cry liberty:
> They bawl for liberty in their senseless mood,
> And still revolt when Truth would set them free."

Such are "free-thinkers," who reject all rules and restraints in reasoning; "free-lovers," who tread down the salutary hedges of personal and social life; "free-lances," like the roving knights of the middle ages, who knew no lord nor captain; "free-booters," who, sailing without chart or compass, ravage the open seas.

Which is the freer; the comet that whizzes aimlessly through space, or the planet that wheels in its normal orbit, never deviating an hair's breadth through countless ages?

Which is freer, the locomotive that jumps the track and ditches itself, or the one that honors the law of its being by smoothly rolling along the rails provided for it?

When seafaring men speak of a ship "sailing free," what do they mean? That she has ceased to obey her rudder and cut loose from restraint? No, the very opposite. They mean that she is running easily in perfect obedience to sails and steering-gear.

V. And this brings us to Christ's definition of Freedom which, broadly expressed, is this: *perfect obedience to perfect law.* This is the precise content of his words, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

There is no greater fact in all the terminology of nations than this. If France had accepted Christ's definition of Freedom as here given, there never would have been a Reign of Terror. If the world had harkened to his philosophy of Freedom we should have been spared libraries of anarchical folly and oceans of blood.

The Son set us free by paying our ransom from sin and turning us into the voluntary and joyous grooves of truth and righteousness. He gives us to understand that wrong living is bondage and right living is Freedom ; that a man is never free until he has put off the habit of license and put on the habit of perfect obedience.

He proposes to set the soul free from sin, by expiating the past and opening the gateway of a holy life. He proposes to set the soul free from the law, by placing obedience on the high level of love, transforming duty into pleasure and enabling the soul to say, "I rejoice to do thy will!" He proposes to make the soul free in service, not from it. None but the truth-finder is really free to serve himself by making the most of himself, his fellow by doing good as he has opportunity unto all men, and God by continually glorifying him.

It is supremely important that we should understand this matter. Christ put his "*Verily, verily*," in the right place, as usual. To make a mistake as to the sanctions of personal freedom is to leave the

king's highway of righteousness and diverge into the open country of error. If, having been ransomed by the Son, we have accepted him, the truth has made us free. Therefore, as Paul said to the Galatians, "For freedom did Christ set us free; stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage." Shall we go back to legalism? Back to ceremonialism? Back to Antinomianism? No, never; since Christ hath made us free.

VI.

IMMORTAL LIFE.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. John v. 25.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word, he shall never see death. John viii. 51.

Our Lord healed a paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda. It was a blessed deed; but, alas! it was wrought on the Sabbath day. The Pharisees were offended because he had broken one of their most stringent laws. He justified himself in these words: "My Father worketh even until now, and I work." By this they were angered the more, because "He made himself equal with God." He went on to show his oneness with the Father; how all his works were by the Father working through him. And what were these? The opening of blind eyes, the wiping away of leprosy, the healing of palsy and other infirmities. These, however, were but slight tokens of divine energy as compared with the mighty works which were presently to be accomplished by the Father working through him.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment; but hath passed out of death into life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." (John v. 24, 25.)

He was addressing the Pharisees on their own ground. They believed in the resurrection of the dead. In this they were at odds with the Sadducees, who rejected all things supernatural. Were not the Scriptures full of this glorious doctrine? Had not the earliest of the patriarchs said, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in my flesh shall I see God?" Had not David sung, "God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol?" Had not other prophets seen wondrous foregleams of it; as when Ezekiel stood in the midst of the valley of vision where the scattered bones were quickened by the breath of God? The Pharisees believed in the Scriptures, and, therefore, they believed in the resurrection.

But here is something different. "The hour cometh, *and now is*." The reference is to something going on here and now—a spiritual resurrection; the coming forth out of darkness into light, and out of bondage into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The same truth was set forth by our Lord in comforting Martha for her brother's death. He said, "Thy brother shall rise again." And Martha an-

swered, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

On another occasion when vindicating himself from the accusations of his enemies, he repeated this truth with double emphasis: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my word he shall never see death.*" (John viii. 51.)

1. Sin is death. This is the most dreadful of the many figures under which it is represented. Not that the sinner has no semblance of life, but all the faculties and powers of his higher nature have lost their vigor. He has a name to live, but is dead. An ice-floe drifted from the delta of the river Lena, on the northern coast of Siberia, clear across into Davis Strait. On this ice-floe was the body of one of the crew of the ill-fated Jeannette. If this man had come by the shortest route he had made a journey of three thousand five hundred miles; if by the longest, almost seven thousand. A long journey for a dead man; yet there are men all around us, dead as to their higher natures, performing all the functions of common life. They toil in our workshops and offices; they eat, drink, marry, and are given in marriage; they accumulate wealth, sit in places of authority, and yet are dead in trespasses and sins. This is not a mere metaphor. The death of the spiritual nature, in such cases, is

awfully real; and, unless there be a real resurrection, the end must be eternal death.

11. Salvation is renewal of life. "I came," said Jesus, "that they may have life, and that they may have it abundantly." At his touch the soul is quickened from the dead. He who stood at the grave of Lazarus, and said "Come forth!" with such power that the shrouded dead arose, is able in like manner to restore those who are under the mortal sentence of the broken law. Was it wonderful that Lazarus should come forth? It is far more wonderful that the word of Jesus Christ should have power to restore the functions of a soul buried in the tomb of unbelief.

An old-time Quaker preacher had a strange experience at his conversion. He fell asleep and dreamed. He seemed to be dead, and laid out for his burial, when a shining face came and bent over him, saying softly, "The man is dead." Then another came and laid a hand over his heart, and said, "It does not throb; he 's dead." Then another came and laid a hand upon his flesh, saying, "It is cold; he is surely dead." So one by one came angels and stood around his couch, till one kindlier face than all the rest came and looked upon him, lifted his hand, and said, "Nay, what is this? A nail print in his palm, and a nail print in his other palm. This man is not dead; he has been crucified! He has been crucified with Christ and lives with him!" On awaking he found the place in the Scripture where it is written, "I have been

crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me."

The secret of spiritual life is indeed to enter into fellowship with the death of Jesus. We begin to live when we stand under his cross and feel one drop of his warm blood falling upon us. "The life is in the blood." The life of every son of man is in the blood of the only begotten Son of God. To believe in him is to come forth out of the sepulchre into the world of beauty and gladness. Oh that we might all know the power of his death, that we might also be partakers of the power of his life! Oh that we all might be able to say in truth and sincerity, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me!"

VII.

LIFE OUT OF DEATH.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit. John xii. 24.

HERE is a statement of a great truth: *Mors janua vitæ*. It is the law of the acorn, of the chrysalis, of the grave-yard; life out of death, and out of death only. "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.*" (John xii. 24.) What is this that the husbandman scatters over his ploughed field? Bread. The bread which is necessary to sustain his own life; bread for his children's hunger. Why then, O husbandman, do you thus broadcast it? Why throw it away? "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white already unto harvest!" The loaded wains come groaning to the granaries. The family gathers about the generous board. The corn of wheat died, and behold, it has passed into a vaster life.

The Lord Christ died. See him yonder upon the

cross, his limbs distorted in the last anguish. No need of any death certificate here. "Is he quite dead?" asked the centurion of his guard. "Aye, this is the spear which I thrust into his side but a moment ago; and when it was withdrawn, it gave sure token that his heart had ceased to beat." The Jews, Priests and Rabbis passed by, and, noting the pallor of his face, they said, "The Man of Nazareth is dead; we shall hear no further of his doctrines and wonderful works. He will trouble us no more." The disciples as they loosed him from the tree felt of his hands, and they were cold; and of his pulse, and it was still. "We hoped," they lamented, "that it was he who should deliver Israel; but, alas! he is dead."

Dead? Then why all this commotion? Why this controversy among the children of men? Is it possible that the world is still moved, troubled, about a dead man—one who died and was buried eighteen centuries ago?

What does this mean? There are some hundreds of millions of people who gather at intervals about a table where a frugal repast is spread. They break the bread and say, "Lo, thus his flesh was bruised." They pour the wine and say, "Lo, thus his blood was shed." And then they lift their hearts and voices and speak with him as a living Christ, laying all their plans and purposes and hopes before him.

And what means this ever increasing multitude of men and women who declare that he, with a mighty

hand, has lifted them out of the horrible pit and miry clay and set their feet upon an everlasting rock? He said to the paralytic in Capernaum, "Son, thy sins are forgiven;" and he has been loosing paralytics from their infirmity and forgiving their sins from then until now. He said to the sinful woman who anointed his feet with oil of spikenard, "Daughter, go in peace; thy sins are forgiven;" and through all the centuries he has been saving magdalenes and restoring them to self-respect and to divine peace. He said to the dying thief on Golgotha, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise;" and there are multitudes of malefactors as guilty as poor Dysmas, who are prepared to testify that just now he met them with the same message of pardoning grace.

And how is it that the name of Jesus is to-day the most potent name in war and diplomacy? His figure towers aloft in the affairs of nations like the Brocken of the Alps. What has become of other magnates who ruled the earth in centuries gone by?

> "Imperial Cæsar, dead and turned to clay,
> May stop a hole to keep the wind away."

But Christ is the most influential arbiter in the affairs of men and nations. Let Napoleon speak from his lonely retreat at St. Helena: "You tell of Cæsars, of Alexanders, of their conquests, of the enthusiasm which they kindle in the hearts of their soldiers; but think of the conquests of this dead Man. Can you conceive of Cæsar as the eternal Emperor of the Roman Senate

and from the depth of his mausoleum governing the empire, watching over the destinies of Rome? Yet here is an Arm that for eighteen centuries has protected the Church from the storms which have threatened to engulf it."

It may be that Macaulay's vision will come true, and at some future time a New Zealander will stand upon a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's. If so, however, it will be because the New Zealander himself will be the last consummate fruit of Christian culture; a man of higher attainments in moral power than those who reared the fabric of St. Paul's. For Christ is a living and omnipotent force moving the world, through each succeeding sun, into a clearer light; and this will continue until, in the restitution of all things, every knee shall bow before him and every tongue confess in the full glory of his millennial reign, that he alone is King over all.

I have been crucified with Christ. Who is this "I"? It is this lower *Ego* or self which is crucified with Christ. But from the death and burial of this lower nature, the truer self rises into newness of life. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me."

I live now as never before for the true advantage of self. So long as my carnal nature had the mastery, the story of my life was constant degeneration. But now that my better nature has triumphed, I enter upon a process of progressive sanctification. I shall

never cease to grow in character, but will continue to increase from grace to grace and from glory to glory, ever approaching the full stature of a man.

I live now more than ever toward others. The lower nature is selfish. The "old man" was given over to self-gratification, but the "new man" follows close in the footsteps of him of whom it was written: "He went about doing good." The influence of one whose sordid self has perished on the cross is an ever-increasing influence for good. The close of his earthly career does not end it. "Fear not, Brother Ridley; we do light a candle in England to-day which by God's grace shall never be put out!"

And I live now more than ever towards God. The unregenerate man who lives after the flesh and not after the Spirit, is of little or no consequence in the kingdom of truth and righteousness. He bears to the household of faith the same relation that a scapegrace son does to any family circle. But as I come forth out of the death of the flesh into the life of the Spirit, I assume a new and vital relation toward the kingdom of God. He counts me now a loyal subject and condescends to work through me for the casting down of the strongholds of wickedness and the building up of truth and righteousness on earth. I am living on a higher level and breathing a new atmosphere; as one who stands upon the summit of a mountain looking down on those who plod along the lower paths; what mites and midgets they are, who bustle to and fro in

quest of things that perish with the using. Up here are life and immortality. I died down yonder on the cross to live up here with God. I buried all and have all. I was crucified, yet I live; nay, Christ liveth in me.

VIII.

THE GREAT SIGN.

"Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation." Mark viii. 12.

No man ever made such extraordinary claims as this Jesus of Nazareth. Who was he? A man of the people who had received his education in a carpenter shop; yet he put himself forward as an infallible teacher in spiritual things. He touched the great problems of eternity with a fearless hand, and he taught as one having authority. The common people followed him in multitudes and heard him gladly. The scribes and Pharisees who were the accredited theologians of the time, looked on with amazement and envy. They inquired of him, "Whence is thine authority?" He answered, "From heaven." "Then give us a sign from heaven," said they, "to verify it."

He had wrought miracles among them. I do not say he claimed to work miracles, because his miracles were at that time undisputed facts. There were present in the popular assemblages those whose eyes

had been opened, whose leprous scales had been wiped away, whose palsied limbs had been restored by his power. In the presence of such witnesses there was no room for denial or doubt. The only question was, Whence did Jesus derive this power to work miracles? Was it from above or from beneath? The scribes and Pharisees intimated that it was from Satan. "No," said Jesus, "it is divine power. I can do nothing except the Father be with me. I and my Father are one." Then said the scribes and Pharisees, "Let us see your credentials. If this power be from heaven, show us a sign from heaven to attest it." But Jesus refused. He could say "No" on occasion, and there was special reasons why he should here refuse to give a sign.

There was one sign, however, which Jesus said these cavilers should have, to wit: The sign of the prophet Jonah. This was a sign, indeed, not from heaven, but from earth, from the darkness of the tomb, from the belly of hell. How runs the record? "The word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness has come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah, and he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare thereof, and went down unto it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of Jehovah. But Jehovah sent out a great wind upon the sea, and there was a mighty

tempest on the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. Then they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea; and the sea ceased from its raging. And Jehovah prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. Then Jonah prayed unto Jehovah his God out of the fish's belly. And Jehovah spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. And the word of Jehovah came unto Jonah the second time, saying Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose and went unto Nineveh. And he began to enter into the city a day's journey, and cried, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown! And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not." (Jonah i. 1–4, 15, 17; ii. 1, 10; iii. 1–3, 5, 10.)

Now this is the sign which Jesus gave to those who refused to believe in him. A sign is something that signifies. What is the significance of the sign of the prophet Jonas? In other words, What did our Lord mean by it?

I. It was a vindication of the truth of prophecy. Our Lord said to his companions on his way to the village of Emmaus as he opened their understanding in the Scriptures, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead."

It is the fashion in these days to make light of the story of Jonah. It is sometimes spoken of as a fable. Let it be understood, however, first, that the Jews did not so regard it. To them it was a record of an historical event. It was never called in question among those who accepted the Scriptures as the word of God. Second, the early Christians believed it. We find conclusive evidence of this in the fact that rude pictures of Jonah and the great fish are to be found on many of the graves in the catacombs. Here the early Christians laid away their dead and professed their faith in a final resurrection by the sign of the prophet Jonas. As the sea monster vomited forth the prophet, so should the grave give up the sleeping dust of their beloved to newness of life and immortality. And third, Christ believed it. To the Jews demanding a sign, he said : "*Verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation*" (Mark viii. 12), which, in another place is thus qualified, "*An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of Jonah.*" (Matt. xvi. 4.) He thus made this truth the guarantee of his own triumph over death. Had he regarded it as mere folk-lore, he could not have made such use of it. We do not use fables as guarantees of fact. Try it in a court of justice on this wise, "As surely as Jason sought and found the Golden Fleece, so surely will I tell the truth." But that would scarcely answer. You must certify by an indubitable

fact like this : As surely as there is a God in heaven I will tell the truth. Or try it in a common matter like the contract for a debt ; make out your note on this wise : " By the sign of Jack and the Beanstalk, or of Cinderella and her Crystal Slipper, I promise to pay when this obligation falls due." Does this seem preposterous ? It is not a whit more so than to allege that Jesus referred to the fable of Jonah when he was called upon to produce a sign in verification of his own claims as the only begotten Son of God.

II. The sign of the prophet Jonas was designed to verify and emphasize the Messiahship of Christ. The antitype of Jonah and the great fish was the resurrection of Christ. This is the one pre-eminent miracle by which he verifies his claim. Thus Paul writes to the Romans : " He was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." This event proved his Messiahship with all that was involved in it.

It is a mighty claim, this claim that Jesus is the very Son of God. It covers his relations with his people every way.

And he vindicates this claim by his resurrection from the dead. Who is the mightiest of earth ? The king of terrors. Is there any to dispute his power ? Nay, there is no power like that of death. Can the power of wealth equal it ? Crœsus is reduced to dust. The power of glory ? Or of armies and navies ? The shores of all the oceans are littered with wrecked

fleets, and the hillsides are strewn with the dust of panoplied hosts. Who then shall dispute with death? On the pale horse, scythe in hand, he always has the right of way. At the door of the cemetery he laughs, and cries, "I gather them in! I gather them in!" "My kingdom for an inch of time!" cries Queen Elizabeth. Fold her hands, cover her eyes; death is too strong for her. "Fie! fie!" said Cardinal Beaufort, when they told him he had but a moment to live; "wherefore shall death have me? Are my treasuries empty? Go bribe him!" Fold his hands and carry him out; death has conquered. Death always conquers.

Always? Nay, not in Joseph's garden. Here Christ meets the king of terrors and vanquishes him —vanquishes him in behalf of all the children of men. In the darkness of this sepulchre, the bands and napkin, that never yet had been resisted, were as green withes in the grip of this Samson, who rent them and came forth wiping the death dew from his face, saying, "O death, where is thy sting? O death, where is thy victory?" And into the fellowship of this triumph he invites his people, following with them always after the bier and standing beside the open graves of their beloved, saying, "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

III. The sign of the prophet Jonas gives us a defi-

nite assurance of life and immortality. It is written, "Life and immortality are brought to light through the Gospel." The world had always dreamed of immortality; had guessed and wondered and hoped. Now, however, the mists of doubt are lifted, the dream becomes a reality, the peradventure gives way to the "Yea" and "Amen" of the risen Son of God.

"Now has Christ been raised from the dead, the first fruits of them that are asleep." And, "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible. Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O death, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 20, 51, 52, 54–57.)

IX.

OPTIMISM.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shalt be turned into joy. John xvi. 20.

The disciples were slow to perceive the necessity of the death of Jesus as a factor in his plan of the Kingdom: so slow that he found it impossible to convey the great truth to them except in bare hints and suggestions. "They were not able to bear it." Even after his crucifixion they failed to apprehend it; so that he was moved to say to those who accompanied him to Emmaus, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?" (Luke xxiv. 25.)

The Verily before us was spoken in the upper room on the night before his crucifixion and was intended to fortify them against their approaching bereavement. It is the Verily of good cheer. "A little while," he said, "and ye behold me not; and again a little while, and ye shall see me," and, "Because I go

unto the Father." They could not understand. Perplexed and bewildered, they said among themselves, "What is this that he saith, 'A little while and ye behold me not; and again a little while and ye shall see me:' and, 'Because I go unto the Father?' We know not what he saith." Then, as far as possible, he explained, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.*" (John xvi. 20.)

(1) "The world shall rejoice." The death of Jesus was an occasion of rejoicing to all concerned in it. Pilate was glad to have the matter off his hands. The rabbis of the Sanhedrin heard the cry, "It is finished!" and congratulated themselves that the Nazarene, who had troubled them so long, would trouble them no more. The people who had lent themselves to the tragedy rejoiced because, as they supposed, the fearless preacher of righteousness was finally disposed of.

We find a parallel to this in the felicitations which are heard among the enemies of Christ whenever his cause meets with an apparent set-back. The world rejoices over every repulse of Christianity. Witness the observations made in the secular newspapers at the time of massacre of the Chinese missionaries. On every hand we were reminded of the fatuous folly of wasting precious life and treasure in an effort to evangelize the heathen. Witness, also, the comments

made on the alleged triumphs of liberalism over the plain teachings of Jesus as to doctrine and ethics. The church stands practically alone in its support of temperance, Sabbath observance, and the sanctity of the marriage relation and other safeguards of social and domestic life. The world cries "Aha!" at every defeat or rebuff in the campaign for the propagation of Christian truth.

(2) "And ye shall be sorrowful." How immeasurable was the grief of the disciples over the death of their Master! They saw no bright light in the cloud. Their dream of Messianic glory was over; their fondly cherished hopes had come to naught. "I go a fishing," said Peter. "We also go with you," said his companions. Why not? What further use of preaching and proselyting? Jesus was dead.

The same sort of pessimism is common in these days. Not a few Christians are of the opinion that everything is going to the bad. Look at the prevalent forms of social and civil corruption! Look at the meager results of missionary effort! Look at the heresies and imperfections of the church! Look at the spiritual apathy of believers! Are we not hastening on to some frightful cataclysm? Is not the church speeding to a doom like that of the Alexandrian craft in Adria, from which only a few choice souls shall escape "on planks and broken pieces of the ship?" Not so. "O fools and slow of heart to believe!" God is not dead nor has he forgotten.

(3) "Your sorrow shall be turned into joy." Three days the Lord lay in his sepulchre and then what rejoicing! What running to and fro! What eager salutations, "The Lord is risen indeed!" At the doorway of the sepulchre stood Mary, with the great sorrow still upon her and unconvinced by the emptiness of the tomb. "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him." One word will set the music ringing in her soul, "Mary!" So may the living Christ, calling us by name, dispel our doubts and revive within us the hope that maketh not ashamed.

For there is no ground for pessimism among those who truly believe in Christ. Weeping may endure for the night, but joy cometh in the morning. The Captain of our salvation loses no battles. His plans never miscarry, and his prophecies never fail.

> "Take heart, the Master builds again!
> A charmed life old Goodness hath:
> The tares may perish, but the grain
> Is not for death.
> God works in all things: all obey
> His first propulsion from the night.
> Wake then and watch;
> The world is gray with morning light!"

The hands on God's dial never move backward. Every time the world rolls around it rolls a little further into the light. What we need is faith, more faith in God and in the ultimate and universal triumph of the gospel of his Son.

The prophet Elisha was sojourning with a theological student in Dothan when the Syrians came by night and encompassed the town. The student arose in the early morning and, taking in the situation at a glance, ran to Elisha wringing his hands and crying, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" It was evident that things had come to the worst possible pass; but Elisha had experience with God. He saw the camp of the enemy but he saw more: and he prayed, "Lord, open the eyes of this young man that he may see!" And straightway the eyes of the youth were opened; and he saw: and, "behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire!" We live in a little world, circumscribed by our finger-tips; and we are blind to the vast domain in which God works for us. Oh, for open eyes to behold his horses and chariots! The worst rebuff that we can meet with in our service of Christ is but for a little while. Our Lord never lies in his sepulchre more than three days. On the morning of the third day we see him again. His kingdom is secure. "His purposes will ripen fast." Opposition is in vain. The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against him: he that sitteth in heaven shall laugh! Take heart, O believer! Despondency is without reason, and doubt dishonors God.

X.

PRIVILEGE AND RESPONSIBILITY.

Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. Matt. xi. 11.

Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city. Matt. x. 15.

Verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see, and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not. Matt. xiii. 17.

Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kindom of God before you. Matt. xxi. 31.

I.

The Least in the Kingdom.

John the Baptist was a belated son of the Old Economy. He did not himself belong to the kingdom of gospel privilege, but held open the door that multitudes might enter into it. The Master said, "What went ye out into the wilderness to behold? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out to see? a man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they that wear soft raiment are in kings' houses, But wherefore

went ye out? to see a prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. *Verily, I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist: yet he that is but little in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.*" (Matt. xi. 7–9, 11.)

But what is this kingdom? It is variously called "the kingdom of God," "the kingdom of heaven," "the kingdom of Christ." It is important that we should understand the Kingdom; for here is the key of the Scriptures. It means the reign of Jehovah, beginning in the individual soul and extending itself into the home-life, the neighborhood and the nation, completing the universal symphony of worship of the living God.

(1) It has its beginning in the individual soul; as Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is within you." And again, "Verily, verily I say unto you, except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And except one be born of water and the Spirit," that is, of purifying and quickening energy, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

(2) It finds its outward manifestation in the visible Church. The Church indeed is not what it ought to be, for the wheat and tares must grow together until the harvesting and winnowing of the great day. Let this be remembered, however, that the Church, as it exists, is a divine institution, and through this living organism God is working for the deliverance of the

world. It represents the accumulated sum and substance of evangelizing effort on earth; and if so, all who are in sympathy with its supreme purpose, should be associated with it.

(3) It finds its ultimate consummation in the millenial glory of Christ. This is the fifth monarchy of Daniel. He saw the great image: head of gold, breast of silver, thighs of brass, legs of iron and feet of clay, representing the successive powers of Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. And then a stone hewn out of the mountain rolled toward it and smote the great image and ground it to powder, which was swept away as chaff is blown from the threshing-floor. And, lo, the stone hewn out of the mountain increased until it became itself a mountain which filled the whole earth. This is the ultimate kingdom. The largest prayer that any Christian can offer is, "Thy kingdom come." The supreme duty of every Christian is set forth in these words, "Seek ye first his kingdom." When this prayer shall rise from the earnest hearts of all believers, and this duty shall be univerally discharged, the vision of St. John the evangelist will be fulfilled: "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be their God." (Rev. xxi. 2–3.)

II.

The Men of Sodom and Gomorrah.

I can remember the call of the court crier from the steps of the old court-house, "Oyez! oyez!" in the frontier village long ago, and they could be seen coming from tavern and along the streets, juror, litigants, lawyers, and hangers-on, all to attend the court. So shall the trumpet sound and the dead shall arise; from the sea, from the land, they shall come to the great assize. All will be there: souls slain in battle, the slaughtered innocents, popes and victims of the Inquisition, the poor wretch who was dragged out of the river yesterday, the millionaire who died with his hand clutching his wealth wrung from widows and orphans, formal professors, the cultured infidels of Christendom, the multitudes who died in the darkness of barbarism, the men of Nineveh and the men of New York, all will be there. Oh, the sea of faces!

The judgment is a necessary factor in the moral economy of the universe. There is but a faint show of justice in the present administration of affairs—all things awry, at odds and ends. The poor are cast down and the wicked exalted. Rewards go where penalties should fall, and *vice versa*. Can we suppose this to be the end? Everywhere else in the universe, save in the moral province, there is a perfect equilibrium; the sun draws no more water from the sea than the lakes can receive and the rivers carry back again to

the sea. If the pressure of the atmosphere were a trifle more or less the earth would fall into fragments. A little less heat and the earth would be frozen; a little more and it would be burned up. A little more electricity in the air and our system would be a magazine of destructive forces. But everything in the physical world is just right. Must we not believe that there is to be a final adjustment in the province of moral things? Ay; the heavens shall be rolled back and yonder will sit the Judge upon his throne. In his hand a great book, and the book shall be opened. The ledger! Then will come the evening-up, to every one his due.

The judgment will be administered in absolute equity. Here we misunderstand each other; we judge by the sight of our eyes.

> "Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
> Decidedly can try us;
> He knows each chord—its various tone,
> Each spring—its various bias."

All things will enter into the consideration: our nature, temperament, heredity, environment, training, temptation; nothing will be forgotten then. And as no false sentence will be possible, so there can be no complaint or plea for a new trial. Those to whom the Judge shall say, "Depart!" will unite with those to whom he says, "Come, ye blessed!" in ascribing to him an absolute fairness. "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether." Then we shall under-

stand the strange providences that so puzzle us now. We shall see the divine goodness above all. As Whittier sings,

> "God's ways seem dark, but soon or late
> They touch the shining hills of day."

An important factor in the ultimate decisions of the Great Day will be the measure of our light. We are moved to ask, "What is to become of the heathen? Are they to be cast into hell for not accepting the gospel which they never heard? Oh, no. They shall be responsible only for their measure of light and shall be punished only for not living up to it; as it is written, "To whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required."

I see a group of rabbis drawing near wearing their broad phylacteries and frontlets on which is written, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord!" and saying to the Judge, "What hast thou for us?" And while they wait the penitent thief draws near, saying, "I saw the Redeemer but once, and my heart was smitten. I repented and believed in him." And to this man the Judge shall say, "Enter into the kingdom of thy Lord."

I see a procession of vestal virgins drawing near, who say, "We kept the sacred fires alive; we illuminated missals and breviaries; we sang the matins and vespers. What hast thou for us?" And yonder the Magdalene draws near with downcast face, saying, "I heard thee as thou wast preaching in the streets, say-

ing, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;' and with my burden of sin and shame upon me I came and anointed thy feet." And at her word the room seems filled with the odor of the precious nard and the Judge says, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord."

An army of Crusaders draws near. They bear the scars of service; they say, "We fought for the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre and made battle beneath the walls of Acre. What hast thou for us?" A little lad draws near, modestly saying, "I had the basket of loaves and fishes, and when thy disciples said, 'Give it for the hunger of the multitude,' I freely gave it." And the Judge bids him also "Enter into the joy of thy Lord."

Here are a multitude of nominal Christians, their names on the church-roll as members in good and regular standing, and they say, "Lord, we lived in the shadow of the sanctuary, sat at the sacramental table, said our prayers and paid our tithes with strict regularity. What hast thou for us?" And, lo, here come the men of Nineveh: "We heard thy prophet once; we heard his warning of approaching danger; we believed that to the penitent thou wouldst be merciful; we bowed ourselves in sorrow before thee and besought thy pardon." And to these the Judge says, "Enter into the joy of thy Lord."

And what of Sodom and Gomorrah? *Verily, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for them than for the*

cities that receive you not. (Matt. x. 15.) They shall be "beaten with few stripes;" that is, they are to be punished but not beyond the measure of their light. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. He takes all things into consideration and decides accordingly. The Jews will be judged by their oracles, the people of Christendom by the Gospel, the men of Sodom and pagans generally by "the law written in their hearts." (Romans i. 18–23; also ii. 13–15.)

Oh, the surprises of that day! There will be many passing through heaven's gate who were lit along the way by a single rushlight, and there will be many who, despite an unspeakable wealth of privilege, shall be shut out for ever. Do we ask, "What is to become of the heathen?" A far more pertinent question is this: "What is to become of you and me?" It is greatly to be feared that Zulus, Bechuanas and Hottentots will point their fingers at some of us in that day. We were ushered into the world with prayer. We were soothed to sleep with sacred melodies. We were brought to the sanctuary to receive the waters of holy baptism. We were taught to say, "Our Father which art in heaven;" to read our Bibles; to revere our confessions of faith. The sound of the church bell has ever been in our ears. We have lived under the shadow of the Christ, yet some of us have never accepted Christ, preferring to bear the burden of our own sin. What is to become of us?

III.

Longing to See and Hear.

It was a great privilege to be associated with Jesus in his earthly ministry. He said to his followers, "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." They saw his miracles; they heard him speak as never man spake concerning the great verities. Well might he say, "*Verily, many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see and saw them not, and to hear the things which ye hear and heard them not.*" Nevertheless our privilege is greater than theirs. He frankly said to them, "It is expedient that I go away." Their fellowship with him had its limitations. It is better to be on terms of spiritual communion with Jesus than to know him after the flesh. His presence is just as real with us as it was in those days and far more helpful. Our familiarity with him is just as intimate and far more reverent. His offices of love are just as gracious and broadened by the measure of reclaimed glory.

"We may not climb the heavenly steeps
To bring the Lord Christ down;
We may not search the lowest deeps,
For him no depths can drown;
But warm, sweet, tender, even yet
A present help is he;
For love has still its Olivet,
And faith its Galilee."

IV.

The Two Sons.

The religious leaders of the Jews challenged the authority of Jesus as a teacher of religious truth. He answered them in a parable, which was like a mirror held up to expose their hypocrisy : "A man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to-day in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not : but afterward he repented himself and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir : and went not. Which of the two did the will of his father? They say, The first. Jesus saith unto them, *Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.* For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the publicans and harlots believed him : and ye, when ye saw it, did not even repent yourselves afterward, that ye might believe him." (Matt. xxi. 28–32.)

The sinner who repents is forgiven ; but the self-righteous man who falsely professes to be living a righteous life, is shut out of the kingdom. This is not to say that a profession is vain. On the contrary it is expected of every true believer that he will keep his windows open toward Jerusalem. "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father." But a false profession is but

sin upon sin. Fringes and phylacteries are bad only when they are superficial and meaningless. The fig-tree was cursed not because it bore leaves but because its leaves deceived the passing traveler with a false promise of fruit. A place on the church roster, a seat at the sacramental table, a Christian birthright and "a name to live" are thrice blessed when they serve as outward tokens of an inward grace; otherwise they provoke the just anger of God. He who welcomes the penitent publican and harlot disowns the self-righteous Pharisee. Wherefore let us "bring up the bottom of our life to the top of our light," if we would have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God.

XI.

REWARDS.

Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Matt. xix. 28.

Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more in this time, and in the world to come eternal life. Luke xviii. 29–30.

Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward. Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16.

Verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward. Matt. x. 42.

Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her. Mark xiv. 9.

Verily I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath. Matt. xxiv. 47.

At the outset, when the followers of Christ were a feeble folk like the conies and when confession of their faith meant loss and suffering, it was manifestly important that they should receive all possible stimulation and encouragement. It was for this reason no

doubt that Jesus had so much to say, and with such emphasis, concerning the rewards of faithful service.

On Thrones of Power.

At the close of Christ's interview with the young ruler, who failed when the test of self-renunciation was applied, Peter said, "Lo! we have left all and followed thee; what then shall we have?" It was a worldly but very natural expression; and the Lord, considerate of weakness, made a wonderful answer: "*Verily I say unto you, that ye who have followed me, in the regeneration* (i. e. the Messianic Kingdom begun at Pentecost and having its consummation in the millenial reign), *when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*" (Matt. xix. 28.) Whether this great promise is to be literally fulfilled is an open question; though I see no reason why the apostles of Christ should not be thus promoted to positions of authority. In any case, however, the promise has been already fulfilled in the ever-increasing influence of these apostles during the progress of the centuries. Their power has eclipsed that of the Cæsars; their authority has survived that of the rabbis of Jewry. Their cause has triumphed and their word is with power among the whole Israel of God.

An Hundred Fold.

The promise given to the Twelve that they should sit

on thrones of power in the kingdom of Christ, was immediately extended, in other form, to all his disciples then and thereafter: "*Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or wife, or brethren, or parents, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, who shall not receive manifold more* (an hundred fold. Matt.) *in this time, and in the world to come eternal life.*" (Luke xviii. 29.) The time was coming when believers were to be required, for the truth's sake, to suffer the loss of earthly possessions and the sundering of earth's dearest ties; and in their adversity this promise was destined to be like a girdle about their loins.

"An hundred fold in this present time!" Here is something better than gold-bearing bonds. Saul of Tarsus proved the truth of it. His conversion to Christ meant the giving up of home, professional outlook, friends, prosperity, ecclesiastical standing, everything; yet when writing to Timothy, after years had passed, he said, "Godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.)

"And in the time to come eternal life." Who shall estimate this? Who can tell the treasures in this casket? "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." *

* The quotations of Scripture in this book are, with this exception from the American Revision. In this instance, however, the Ameri-

"*They have Their Reward.*"

In the enunciation of the principles of his kingdom our Lord had this to say about almsgiving, as a particular form of righteousness: "Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them: else ye have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. *Verily, I say unto you, They have received reward.*" (Matt. vi. 1, 2.) The emphasis of the Verily is on the word "have" or "have received." The hypocrites (literally, mask-wearers), who cast their coins into the trumpet-mouths of chests in the temple treasury so conspicuously as attract attention, have their reward here and now in the praise of men. The Greek word *apekousi* indicates a receipt in full.

A like statement is made as to prayer: "And when ye pray, ye shalt not be as the hypocrites: for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. *Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward.*" (Matt. vi. 5.) They get their wages, what they have earned, here and now, in a reputation

can rendering is so unnecessarily awkward that I decline to follow it. It runs on this wise: "Things which eye saw not and ears hear not and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him."

for piety. They were not to look for an answer to their prayers, since this was not what was uppermost in their minds. They prayed in order that they might be seen of men; and men saw them and said, "Behold their devotion!" What more could they ask? "They *have received* their reward," in self-complacency and spiritual pride. The account is closed.

So, also, as to fasting: "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may be seen of men to fast. *Verily I say unto you, They have received their reward.*" (Matt. vi. 16.) It was the custom, with those who desired a reputation for singular piety, to forego their usual ablutions and hair-dressing, to wear sack-cloth and put ashes on their faces, so that they might "be seen of men to fast." And for this they secured a present recompense in the applause of spectators, who said, "Behold, the piety of these men!" But God, who looketh on the heart, saw no merit in it. A true fast is sincere sorrow for sin and abstinence from it.

"Is this a fast—to keep
The larder lean,
And clean
From fat of veals and sheep?

"Is it to quit the dish
Of flesh, yet still
To fill
The platter high with fish?

"Is it to fast an hour,
Or ragged to go,
Or show
A downcast look, and sour?

"No! 'tis a fast to dole
Thy sheaf of wheat,
And meat,
Unto the hungry soul.

"It is to fast from strife,
From old debate
And hate,—
To circumcise thy life;

"To show a heart grief-rent;
To starve thy sin,
Not bin;—
And that's to keep thy Lent."

They shall not lose their Reward.

In speaking of the treatment accorded to his disciples our Lord was pleased to identify his interests with theirs, saying "He that receiveth you, receiveth me." His tender interest in their welfare is manifest in the Verily that followed: "*And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, Verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*" (Matt. x. 42.) Observe the endearing term "these little ones." He is speaking not only of the twelve apostles but of the humblest of his followers. And observe the small kindness, "a cup of cold water." Observe, also, that the kindness referred to is ministered to a disciple "in

the name of a disciple;" and the reward, which shall certainly be won, is the commendation of the Master, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye have done it unto me."

The Ointment of Spikenard.

Our Lord and his disciples were being entertained in the house of one Simon, who appears to have been healed of leprosy and took this method of showing his gratitude. While they sat at supper Mary, the sister of Lazarus, came with an alabaster box of spikenard and anointed his head. There were some in the company who murmured against the "waste"; whereupon Jesus said, "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. *And verily I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.*" (Mark xiv. 9.)

We hear a great deal about "good works," and it is important that we should know what a good work is. Here is our Lord's definition; the anointing of his head was declared to be a good work, and it was particularly so because it was wrought *on him.* Anything done for Christ's sake is acceptable to God.

And its reward is sure. The good work of Mary has been published throughout the ever-increasing realms of Christendom for nineteen centuries. It is a memorial to her love. The true token of love is per-

sonal ministry. The estimated value of the ointment in this case was about fifty dollars; but her deed was appraised in the words "She hath done what she could." This is the highest praise, since angels could do no more. The ministry of Christian love is like ointment in the hand "which bewrayeth itself." God and men take knowledge of it.

"Oh may we thus, like loving Mary,
Ever our choicest offerings bring,
Nor grudging of our toil, nor chary
Of costly service to our King!

"What though the scornful world, deriding
Such waste of love, of service, fears?
Still let me pour, through taunt and chiding,
The rich libation of my tears.

"I bring my box of alabaster;
Accepted let the offering rise!
So grateful tears shall flow the faster,
In founts of gladness from mine eyes!"

Ruler Over All His Goods.

Watch! Watch! "Let the door be on the latch in your home, for it may be in the morning he will come."

In many ways Jesus enjoined on his disciples the need of watchfulness in view of his coming to judgment. Here the Parable of the Householder is used to enforce it: "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath set over his household, to give them their food in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so

doing. *Verily, I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath.*" (Matt. xxiv. 47.) That is, promotion is the reward of faithfulness. "To him that hath shall be given." A true Christian loves the privilege of service, and no compensation for service can, to his mind, exceed the hope of being permitted to serve in greater measure and in larger ways.

XII.

PUNISHMENT.

Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Matt. xxv. 12.

Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou have paid the last farthing. Matt. v. 26.

The natural heart would fain believe that in the land that lies beyond the river of death all the immortals are permitted to wander in green pastures and pluck the fruits of the same tree of life; but, aside from revelation, there is that within the soul which denies the possibility of this. We know full well, even if God had never told us, that between the holy and unholy in that other world, there must be an impassable gulf. For what fellowship is there between light and darkness?

You may cherish only the kindest feelings toward the poor drunkard who knocks at your door and begs for shelter; but you do not invite him, ragged and filthy, to make himself at home in your family circle. Thus it is with sinners in the life hereafter; they cannot be received into the company of the sons and daughters of God. As they were here, so they shall

be there; as it is written, "He that is filthy let him be filthy still." How then can they dwell with those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? They must depart to their "own place;" and that place becomes hell not by reason of its being a bottomless pit or a furnace of fire, or a region of outer darkness, but because its inhabitants are all alike polluted with the indelible stain of sin. "Without are dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolators, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie." Here is the penal colony where all earth's guilty and wretched are brought together and forced to endure each other's companionship.

If the fairest star in the heavens were set apart to be the dwelling of these guilty souls, and if the richest gift of mind and nature were poured upon them in eternal plenty; if no righteous man were ever to appear among them; if Sabbath bells and prayers were never heard; if the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eye and the pride of life were to keep a never-ceasing saturnalia, with no restriction from God or conscience; this society would verify and illustrate the Scriptural law of retribution to the uttermost. For there can be no real happiness without God: and the sentence upon those without is, "*Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*" (Matt. xxv. 12.)

If Paris during the "reign of terror," when no restraint was laid upon passion and lust, became so hor-

rible that thieves and harlots fled from it with their ears stopped, as from a burning Sodom; what must that place be where all the vicious characters of earth are brought together and given free license to revel as they will in an endless carnival of crime, with no restraint put upon them by the felt presence of God.

Just beyond the walls of ancient Jerusalem was a deep gorge where all the waste and offal of the city were deposited. It was called the Valley of Hinnom; and from this the Jews derived their name of hell—a place of stench and corruption. There is no possibility there of communing with the holy and just. Each soul, itself polluted, is doomed to dwell forever in the company of polluted souls.

Leaving out all thought of the unquenchable fire and the undying worm, there is an unspeakable possibility of pain in this abandonment of the soul to itself. If wicked men grow weary of the dance and banquet here, what weariness must oppress them there as the interminable æons roll by. Pleasure loses its power to please. The stolen waters of sin grow bitter as Marah. The thirsty drink without quenching their thirst; and the hungry eat of the fruit of lust, that seemed so tempting when it hung from forbidden trees, to find that now when they may gather it freely everywhere, it turns to ashes on their lips! The wheel of Ixion rolls round and round forever! Sisyphus drags his burden up the hill once and again forever!

This banishment from God is called "outer darkness." To be exiled from the presence of him who alone can satisfy the soul, who alone is the fountain of spiritual life, and without whom all is emptiness and vanity, who can deliver from the guilt and bondage of sin and replenish the heart with joy till it runneth over—this, of itself, is to be bound with "everlasting chains." Hell could be nothing worse than to hear forever the voice of the Father saying, "*I never knew you!*"

It is a proverb among the French that "Punishment is the recoil of crime;" the strength of the back-stroke being in the proportion to original impulse. The duration of punishment must therefore be as the duration of guilt. But guilt, in its very nature, is eternal; it can only be removed by changing the structure of the soul, which cannot be done except by divine power in regeneration. Once guilty is always guilty; a thief to-day is a thief to-morrow and forever. There is no expiatory virtue in suffering.

"How then is it," you ask, "that human law exacts a limited penalty of the criminal and thereafter regards the crime as expiated?" The answer is that human law does not recognize guilt as such at all; that is, guilt as incurred by a violation of moral law. It punishes only for the protection of society, and to this end a limited penalty may be sufficient. But God regards men not only in their relations to their fellow men but as individuals; and takes cognizance of guilt

as a violation of the moral law. So long as any human soul is stained with guilt, in this sense, so long must its punishment go on.

Guilt is the incurring of a debt to justice; "*Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou have paid the last farthing.*" (Matt. v. 26.) Whenever that debt is canceled the soul is restored to the favor of God. But what shall pay it? Punishment? This has no purifying power; it cannot remove guilt, and therefore it cannot stay the avenging sword. Sin is now woven into the structure of the soul and "there is no remedy."

If salvation were offered now, upon condition of repentance, is it conceivable that a sinful soul could repent in such circumstances? There is more hope that a planet thrown out of the plane of its orbit and wheeling through space at random should return of itself to its proper place in the order of the universe. The spirits of the lost are left to themselves. No rainbow spans the abyss. "Eternity," says Bridaine, "is a timepiece whose pendulum speaks incessantly, repeating two words only in the silence of the tomb: ever, never; ever, never! During these vibrations a soul cries out, 'What is the hour?' and the voice of another soul replies, 'Eternity!'"

XIII.

INASMUCH.

Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire, which is prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was hungry, and ye did not give me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me.

Matt. xxv. 40–45.

He was a wise student of human nature who said, "All the world's a stage; and all the men and women merely players." We cover up our faults and virtues alike, and thus deceive not only the audience but ourselves as well.

How many mountebanks there are who palm themselves off as public benefactors; like those Pharisees who, devouring widows' houses, flung their coins into the brazen mouth of Corban, as if to say, "Behold how I love my fellow men!" And, on the other hand, how

many philanthropists there are who, doing good *sub rosa*, are quite unconscious of it.

It is apparent that we need a divine Verily in this matter. Our definitions are so false, our judgments so shallow, that we are in danger of missing the point altogether. And when our Lord speaks, it is to show that his thoughts are not as our thoughts. His is an unusual way of thinking, wherefore he must needs give us the Verily to emphasize it.

Here is the picture: The followers of Jesus are standing before him in judgment. In the light of his ineffable glory they are thinking of their sins and shortcomings, of wasted privileges and lost opportunities, and saying to themselves, "We have neglected the things we ought to have done and have done the things we ought not." But listen: "Come, ye blessed! For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; I was naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." Now mark their surprise. They never dreamed of such a dénouement. They had hoped for mercy but here is more: "Enter into the joy of thy Lord!" We may not guess what follows: for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

But mark their surprise: "Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? or athirst and gave thee drink?

And when saw we thee a stranger and took thee in, or naked and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick and in prison and visited thee?" And the explanation is so unusual, so contrary to our way of thinking, so amazing that we could scarcely believe were not the emphasis put upon it: *Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me.*" (Matt. xxv. 40.)

Now this means, to begin with, that the best sort of goodness is that which has the least alloy of self-consciousness in it. Much of the world's "charity" is wrought for selfish ends. Millionaires build homes for the poor, schools, libraries, churches, hospitals and reformatories, and carve their names over the doorways. Philanthropists oftentimes sound a trumpet before them. Abou ben Adhem gives to a beggar that he may relieve himself of the pain of pity or warm himself with "the generous pleasure of a kindly deed." But true benevolence is benevolent not for self's sake but for the sake of the other man. Wherefore the Lord said, "When thou doest alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:" that is, divest thyself of all self-praise, self-pleasing, self-satisfaction. Thus it is written, "Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, seeketh not its own."

Again, this Verily emphasizes the fact that the sum total of benevolence is rather a great bundle of small kindnesses than one or a few great ones. It seems a trifling matter to put a cup of cold water to thirsty

lips or lend a hand to the fallen, yet these are the true philanthropies.

> "A little bit of patience often makes the sunshine come,
> And a little bit of love makes a very happy home;
> A little bit of hope makes a rainy day look gay,
> And a little bit of charity makes glad a weary way."

We are apt to miss our opportunities of serving faithfully in the ranks by waiting for a commission to lead the army. We want to preach like Paul, and see souls converted as doves flock to their windows; while Christ wants us to evangelize the world by letting our light shine every moment of every day. The opportunity is all about us. I have heard of a young woman who, after listening to a sermon on "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," left the meeting with a resolve that she would help the first needy soul she met. On her way home she passed a police station; and it chanced that a released prisoner, a woman of the town, was just coming down the steps. "Now is my chance," she inwardly said, "to speak a kind word in the Master's name; but, alas, her knees shook and her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth. But the opportunity was going and she must act; so, as the poor creature passed, she laid a hand upon her shoulder and kissed her. The woman shrank back, crying "Don't do that! Oh, don't do that! Nobody's done that since mother died!" And the way was thus opened for the saving of a soul. These are the things the Master requires of us.

And again, this Verily emphasizes the important fact that Christ is met with in strange ways and places. He honors the sanctuary and the closet with his presence; but if we really desire to serve him let us climb rickety stairways and descend into basements, visit the prisons and hospitals; and we shall find him there in the person of the "little ones." He is pleased to identify himself with the poor and suffering; so that when we do a kindness to them in his name it is as if we did it unto him. It is a mistake to expect Christ to appear before us, *in propria persona*, asking to be fed, clothed, and visited. The least of his brethren must be as Christ himself to us. In the Vision of Sir Launfal he is represented as saying,

> "The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
> In whatso we share with another's need;
> Not what we give, but what we share,
> For the gift without the giver is bare;
> Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,
> Himself, his hungering neighbor, and me."

So then, the great matter is to be sure that we are fully consecrated to Christ and thus willing to serve him in whatsoever guise or *incognito* he may present himself to us. And the only way of making sure of this is to do good as we have opportunity unto all men.

And if we are true Christians we are really doing this, whether we know it or not. Let us not worry.

Christ is not "a hard man." He sees good in our lives where we are not conscious of it. He knows the main purpose; and however we may trip and stumble, having loved us, he will love us to the end. I believe that on the whole, he thinks better of us than we do of ourselves. He is placing unknown things to our credit and preparing a great surprise for us. We look within too much, subject our motives to too precise an analysis, grow discouraged without reason, needlessly doubt our purity of purpose and tremble without reason in anticipation of the Judgment Day. He that sitteth on the throne is our Best Friend. He remembereth that we are dust. He knows our trials, misgivings, and self-accusations: but all is well if we can stand before him, like Peter, saying "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!"

XIV.

RICHES.

Verily I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Matt. xix. 23.

To those who, with a malign purpose, asked Jesus concerning the lawfulness of the capitation tax, he said, "Show me a penny." The coin in evidence was probably a silver denarius, having on one side the image of Tiberius and on the other the legend, *Pontifex Maximus*. It was an honest coin and worthy of all respect; let it serve our purpose, by way of suggestion, as to the teaching of Christ concerning the use and abuse of money. Hear now the Catechism of the Penny.

Question 1.—What is the moral quality of this coin?

Answer.—It has none. Everything depends on what is done with it. Money is called "currency" (from *currere*, to run), because it passes to and fro like a messenger on errands good or evil. It is a mere convenience, a medium of exchange, "a common denominator of the fractions of life." It was silver

in this instance; but shells or wampum, with conventional approval, would have answered just as well.

There never was a more obvious sophism than that of Proudhon, "Property is robbery." If there be any robbery in the case, it is not that of the owner but of the indolent fellow who declines to own it. Industry is honesty; and industry wins the penny. Money-making is a legitimate business, though multitudes pervert it. Blessed is he who has the genius for it! The larger his success, the better for himself and for the world.

Question 2.—Who owns the penny?

Answer.—Its ownership is threefold. As coin of the realm, Cæsar, that is, the government, has a tributary right in it. The man in possession may also claim a just ownership, on the ground that he has earned it. But the ultimate ownership, back of both Cæsar and the possessor, rests in God, as Creator and Proprietor of all. Cæsar's claim is wholly derivative, since "the powers that be are ordained of God." The possessor's claim is merely secondary, since his strength of mind and sinew came from God.

Question 3.—What is the precise relation of the possessor to his penny?

Answer.—It is expressed in the word stewardship. And just here the teaching of Christ begins. He makes frequent use of such terms as "landlord," "householder," "husbandman." In the Parable of the Talents he represents God as "a man, going into

another country, who called his own servants and delivered unto them his goods." The relation is set forth still more clearly in the Parable of the Pounds, where he says, "A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye herewith, till I come."

Question 4.—How long shall the possessor hold his penny?

Answer.—Until called for. And it may be called for any time. God speaks in many voices, ever and anon requiring of his people the things entrusted to them. An account is kept, meanwhile, in certain "books of remembrance;" and sooner or later "the Lord of those servants cometh and maketh a reckoning with them."

In any case, death ends the tenure. It is an old saying, "There are no pockets in shrouds." We take nothing with us but our very own; such as will, reason, habit and character. All else drops from our cold fingers.

> "If thou art rich, thou art poor;
> For, like an ass whose back with ingots bows,
> Thou bear'st thy heavy riches but a season,
> And death unloads thee."

And after death the Judgment; that is the reckoning for goods entrusted to us. This day of reckoning

is a necessary factor in the problem of human affairs. Our world would be but a topsy-turvy world without it. Here is a poor man who has spent his life in a hard struggle to keep the wolf from his door; here is another of whom we say, "Everything he touches turns to gold." Fortunate man? Well, that depends. We must wait to see what happens at the judgment bar. There the apparent inequalities of Providence shall be satisfactorily accounted for.

Question 5.—What shall the possessor do with his penny?

Answer.—Three things are possible. It is clear that a considerable part of a man's earnings must be used for the necessities of life; but what after that? What about the margin? First, it may be hoarded; like the talent which was wrapped in a napkin and buried in the ground. The Lord's judgment as to this procedure is evident from his words, "Thou wicked and slothful servant." And again Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourself treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also."

A second use, which the possessor may make of his penny, is to squander it. Thus the prodigal, having gotten his portion of the inheritance, "took his journey into a far country and wasted his substance with riot-

ous living." Another prodigal, having amassed great wealth, crosses the sea and gambles it away at Monte Carlo. No doubt there is a temporary pleasure in such profligacy; as Jesus said, "Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation." So far as we know, Dives in the Parable was a respectable gentleman. It does not appear that he was addicted to any flagrant vices; his fault was utter selfishness. He was arrayed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day; taking no interest in the beggar at his gate.

Or, thirdly, the possessor of the penny may hold it subject to the divine call; and he will hear that call in every appeal for the material or spiritual betterment of his fellow-men.

It is not enough to answer this demand with a tithe. The tithe is a good beginning; that is all. In the Parable of the Householder and his Vineyard it is said "When the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, to receive his fruits." The withholding of such fruits is dishonesty. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye rob me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings." (Mal. iii. 8–10.) It is a mistake, however, to suppose that our obligations are discharged when we have turned back to the Lord a percentage of our income. The penny itself is his. The vineyard is his; the husbandmen holding it only and absolutely in trust for him.

Question 6.—Are there any dangers attendant on the possession of the penny?

Answer.—Yes; many. There is the danger that the possessor will regard it as his own. This was the fault of "a certain rich man, whose ground brought forth plentifully." (Luke ii. 17–21.) "He reasoned within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do; I will pull down my barns and build greater; and there will I bestow all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry. But God said unto him, Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?" He spoke of "my fruits," "my barns," and "my goods," forgetting the prior claim of God. Indeed, he seems not to have brought God into the reckoning at all. And it is to be feared that others reason in the same way. The penny is oftentimes a most plausible sophist. Christ spoke of "the deceitfulness of riches," likening them to thorns which "choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful." (Matt. xiii. 22.) In order to verify his words one has only to contemplate the character of certain possessors of wealth. How frequently it shrivels the heart! How it blinds the eyes to fairest things! How it "chokes" the high purposes and noble aspirations of the soul!

Another danger is in putting one's trust in the

penny; that is, giving it a fictitious value and precedence of better things. Observe the arrogance of a certain class. O how lofty are their eyes and their eyelids lifted up! I speak not now of those who serve God faithfully with their wealth, but of purse-proud parvenus, who make a grotesque display and found a false respectability upon it. It was a man of this character who said to John Bright, "Do you know, sir, that I am worth a million and a half sterling?" to whom the blunt old commoner replied, "Yes; and I know that you are worth nothing else." It was such that Jesus had in mind when he said, "*Verily I say unto you, It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" And when his disciples expressed their amazement at this sweeping proposition, he put a still deeper emphasis upon it, saying, "*It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.*" (Matt. xix. 23–24.)

If a man find himself thus betrayed by his penny, what shall he do? Get rid of it! Aye, if needs be by casting it into the sea, as did Menecrates, saying, "I will destroy thee lest thou destroy me!" This was the teaching of Jesus in the case of the young man who came running and kneeling to him, asking, "Good Teacher, What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" He said, "One thing thou lackest; go, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come follow

me." (Mark x. 20–22.) The young man did not follow his wise counsel: "But his countenance fell at that saying, and he went away sorrowful; for he was one that had great possessions." It was indeed a heroic remedy which Jesus here proposed; but nothing else would do. The penny stood between the soul of this young man and God; therefore it must be sacrificed. If you have wealth and cannot hold it in honest trust for God, it behooves you forthwith to get rid of it. For all considerations in this world lead up to the great problem, "What doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?"

Question 7.—What are the privileges of the penny?

Answer.—They are many and great. The man who, after attending to the necessities of life, has a margin of wealth, be it little or great, may use it for the betterment of the condition of his fellow-men. In this case he has his reward in what Cowper calls "the generous pleasure of kindly deeds." Sidney Smith said, "I think of life as arranged in two piles, one of misery and the other of happiness. If to-day I can take a little from the world's misery and add to its happiness, I shall, at evening, think myself a fortunate man."

And there are many who make this gracious use of the penny. Think of the asylums, hospitals and other institutions of charity, built and supported by voluntary contributions. Who shall estimate the

money which is constantly expended in the carrying on of beneficent reforms? O there are many "good Samaritans" caring for the wounded, bringing them to the inn, paying their fare and saying to the host, "Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee." (Luke x. 35.)

But there is no obscuring the fact that the merest pittance of the wealth possessed by God's people is used for the propagation of the gospel. O the shame of it! While enterprises for the mental and physical amelioration of the race are receiving millions of the Lord's money, his church stretches out her hands like a mendicant for the meager support of her endeavors to convert the world! The stewards of the Lord's treasure are praying every day, "Thy kingdom come!" while they lavish manifold more on themselves and the physical needs of society than on their Missionary Boards; knowing all the while that untold multitudes are dwelling in the regions of darkness and of the shadow of death! The blinding power of great wealth is nowhere more conspicuous than in this fact. The word of the Master to his unfaithful servant was, "Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, then I should have received back mine own with interest." The Church is our Lord's "Exchange," through which he would utilize the wealth entrusted to his servants, to be held, subject to his demand, for the propagation of the gospel and the bringing of the

world to God. The time will come when God's talents will be thus put at interest for him. Then his messengers will run to and fro and the welkin will ring with the story of salvation, and the earth shall be full of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

XV.

GIVING.

Verily I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than all they that are casting into the treasury. Mark xii. 43.

On the last day of his earthly ministry our Lord went into the temple court and "sat over against the treasury." This treasury was the place of the chests or receptacles into which the people cast their offerings, corresponding to our collection boxes or baskets. These chests had flaring apertures like trumpets, which could be made to ring the giver's praise.

"And he beheld (rather, was observing) how the multitude cast money into the treasury." He saw the rich throwing their gold pieces into the brazen throat of the chests, and in their resounding echoes finding their immediate reward. He observed the contributors passing by one by one until this woman came, a poor widow, and modestly gave out of her penury two mites, that is, a paltry farthing; whereupon he said, *Verily I say unto you, This poor widow cast in more than all they that are casting into the treasury.*" Observe, (1) She gave modestly. "When thou doest

alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." (2) She gave of her penury. God has regard not so much to what a man gives as, to what he keeps. This woman kept nothing; the farthing was "all that she had." She recognized the Lord's ownership in her little all. (3) She gave in faith, loving God and believing that in her penury he would provide for her. Thus the manner, the measure and the motive of her gift were all approved.

He sitteth over against the treasury still. All our gifts are observed and recorded by him. Will the great ledger show, one day, a vast disparity between what we have lavished on ourselves and what we have given to God.

The rule of giving is the same that applies in every department of the Christian life, to wit, self denial. David said wisely in the matter of Araunah's threshing floor, "I will not offer unto the Lord of that which doth cost me nothing."

The poor man who forgets a comfort that he may cast a penny into the Lord's treasury, is more deserving of praise than the millionaire who builds a church or endows a hospital, yet denies himself no luxury. God is not satisfied with what Shakespeare calls "the shaking of our superflux." The members of the Macedonian church were among the very poorest of the early Christians, yet what a fine eulogium was pronounced upon them. "I bear them witness," wrote the apostle, "how their deep poverty abounded unto

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the riches of their liberality. For according to their power, yea and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord. And this, not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord."

A Christian's first duty is to Christ and to the Church which is his bride. Otherwise selfishness is a holier passion than gratitude. There is no saying that covers a greater multitude of sins and shortcomings than the proverb "Charity begins at home." It is true that "if any provideth not for his own, and specially for his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever," but how much better, pray, is he that provides for his own wants and his own household yet never seeks by prudence and economy to share his income with his fellow-men? Shall it be said that the woman of Zarephath did wrong to offer the prophet a portion of her meager store until she had first made sure that her child and herself would not suffer by it? On the contrary, I believe it might be shown, by a process of mathematical computation, that benevolence is the best possible provision against hunger and nakedness. No man ever yet grew poor by "lending to the Lord." There is no better investment. It is a policy of insurance whose benefits accrue to our children's children. John Bunyan wrote:

> "A man there was—and people called him mad—
> The more he gave away the more he had."

Is it not always so? How else shall we construe the

promise, "Blessed is the liberal man; the Lord shall make his bed in sickness; his horn shall be exalted?" "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." "Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, shall they give into your bosom." "There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more: and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to want."

But our giving should be raised above all selfish consideration. We ought to give not for self's sake, but for love of him who for our sakes became poor that we by his poverty might be made rich. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. What shall we render unto him for this unspeakable gift? Is any offering of gold or frankincense or myrrh too large to measure our gratitude? Is any ointment of spikenard too costly for the anointing of his feet? God's blessing is always a gratuity; but, none the less does it call for its meed of gratitude. And praise has no expression in human life but love and benevolence. It is wrong to regard our wealth, little or great, as ours in fee simple; we hold it merely in trust. We are God's stewards; and for the proper use and investment of every farthing assigned to us we shall be called to give account. If we array ourselves in purple and fine linen while the poor lie at our gates naked and shivering, or if we dwell in houses of cedar while

the ark of God is within curtains, it is because we are appropriating that which never belonged to us. "Yet ye rob me," saith the Lord of hosts. "But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? *In tithes and offerings!*" Every penny of our wealth is stamped with the divine image and superscription; the gold and the silver are his. "Render therefore unto God the things that are God's."

I would rather be an organ-grinder living on the charity of those who love the humble harmony of sweet sounds, than to be a millionaire with a soul delighting only in the magnificent music of clinking coin. The happiest man that ever lived was one who had not where to lay his head; and he revealed the secret of his surpassing joy when he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." "He was the great Giver. He came from heaven to bring good gifts to men—sight to the blind, peace to the troubled soul, rest to the weary and heavy laden, light and life to all that were in darkness and the shadow of death; a cup of God's cool water for the parched lips of those that were thirsting for righteousness. And to the end that these good gifts might bear the name of self-denying love, he gave his tears for sorrow, his blood for sin. He gave his life a ransom for the lost. Loving to give, he gave all. He that would be truly happy must be Christlike in this: "willing to communicate." It was one of the favorite sayings of Marcus Aurelius that "an unshared pleasure could not be enjoyed;"

and Ausonius was fond of saying, "An ingrate is earth's ugliest production." Put these two maxims together and you have the reason why an illiberal man is of all men most miserable. His heart is a prison-cell where a spirit that was made to rejoice in love and liberty and light is bound with the iron chains of selfishness. There are no windows in his cell through which this captive may watch the pure delights of his fellow-men—no windows above through which he may look toward the God at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore. But the generous man whose eyes are ever turned outward and upward, who denies himself that he may help the needy, and spend and be spent for his Master's sake; who forgets himself in his eagerness to hear the widow's thanks and God's "Well done, good servant," this is the man who has the peace that passeth understanding.

> "But for one end are riches worth your care;
> To make humanity the minister
> Of bounteous Providence, and teach the breast
> The generous luxury the gods enjoy."

Giving is as really a grace as praying or serving. It is an essential arc of the great circle of character. Wherefore let us give because it is blessed to give. "Give and let not thy heart be grieved when thou givest, because that for this the Lord shall bless thee in all whereunto thou puttest thy hand." Give like the liberal God, "who from his gracious nature doth bestow, nor stops to ask reward." Give because it

yields in this present life a hundred fold, and in the time to come life everlasting. If God has elected you to riches, let not your riches be tied like a millstone about your neck, nor clutched till death shall open your cold fingers and cry, " Let go."

Make to yourselves friends who shall receive you into everlasting habitations. On the tombstone of the good Earl of Devon and his wife these words are written: " What we spent we had, what we left we lost, what we gave we have." All that we store in bags that wax old, all that we pay as a bribe to honor, all that we waste on follies that perish with the using; all this is gone. Shrouds have no pockets. But what we give we keep; what we lend to the Lord is ours forever.

XII.

HIS EQUALITY WITH GOD.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner. John v. 19.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am. John viii. 58.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. John xiii. 20.

THE problem of the Messiah is the problem of the ages. Jesus is the claimant. Is Jesus the Christ or not? All earnest souls are interested in this query.

"We walk at high noon, and the bells
Call to a thousand oracles,
But the sound deafens, and the light
Is stronger than our dazzled sight;
The letters of the sacred Book
Glimmer and swim beneath our look;
Still struggles in the age's breast
With deepening agony of quest
The old entreaty: 'Art thou he,
Or look we for the Christ to be?'"

He claims to be the Messiah. To the woman at the well he said, "I that speak unto thee am he." Over and over again, on various occasions, he reiterated it. He insisted on his divine nature and mission. Thrice he sealed it with a double Verily: when he affirmed his oneness with God, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father doing: for what things soever he doeth, these the Son also doeth in like manner*" (John v. 19); again when he arrogated to himself the most sacred of the divine titles, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am*" (John viii. 58); and again when he identified himself with God in the fellowship of his disciples, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that send me.*" (John xiii. 20.)

The claim of Jesus is perfectly clear. The only question is, does he verify it?

A weaver who had made an elaborate piece of tapestry hung it, stretched upon the tenter-hooks, in his yard. That night it was stolen. A piece of tapestry was found by the officers which seemed to answer the description, but as the pattern was not unlike that of other fabrics, there must be definite proof. It was brought to the weaver's yard and there the perforations in the fabric were found to correspond precisely to the tenter-hooks. This was demonstration. In like manner if we place the life and character of Jesus

over against all prophecies of Messiah in Scripture, in the sacred books of the false religions, and in the universal longings of the race, we shall find that there is a perfect correspondence point by point. If this shall indeed prove to be the fact, we should feel justified in saying that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the long-looked-for Messiah, the Christ of God.

I. His birth. It is everywhere agreed in these legends and prophecies that the Messiah must be God-man. This is the basis of Anselm's famous argument, *Cur Deus Homo.* The Messiah must in his nature be like Jacob's ladder; his humanity resting upon the earth and his divinity taking hold upon the throne of God. At this point Jesus meets the requirement. Of him it had been prophesied, "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel, which is, being interpreted, God with us."

II. His character. The One who is to deliver the race from its sin must himself be sinless. But where shall such an One be found? We peer, by the light of Diogenes' lantern, into all human faces in vain. There is none that doeth good; no, not one. Here Jesus of Nazareth is unique. He betrays no consciousness of sin, utters no cry of penitence, and betrays no concern for his own salvation. On the other hand he challenges the world to find a joint in the harness of his perfect righteousness. The schoolmen of the Middle Ages discussed at great length the

question whether he was "not able to sin or able not to sin;" but they never suggested that he sinned. The judge who delivered him to death brought him out to Gabbatha and said to the people, "I find no fault in him at all." The centurion, who had charge of his execution, was moved to cry, "Verily, this was a righteous man!"

III. His preaching. The general feeling was, as the woman of Samaria said, "That the Messiah cometh; when he is come, he will declare unto us all things." He was to solve the great questions of duty and destiny. The carpenter of Nazareth did this. He touched the great problems of the eternal life with a bold hand. He spake not as the scribes but with authority. He untied knots that had defied all the Athenian schools. The sermons of others die by limitation. Origen, Tertullian, Chrysostom, their voices have left only a lingering echo. But the discourses of Jesus, his sermon to Nicodemus, his sermon on the mount, his sermon at the well, his sermon in the plain, his sermon in the upper chamber, his sermon on the mount of ascension are still "burning thoughts in breathing words," and they flame around the world. A detachment of Roman soldiers was sent to arrest him as he was once teaching in Solomon's porch. They listened for a time and were amazed. On returning without their prisoner, they were asked, "Why have ye not brought him?" A strange answer was this, "Never man spake like this man."

IV. His miracles. These were unlike all other miracles. Not only in their beneficence, but in that fact that they were all symbolical of spiritual truth. The opening of blind eyes set forth the power of Jesus to enable the soul to see spiritual things. The wiping away of the leper's spots was an apologue of the power of the gospel to deliver the soul from the defilement of sin. The healing of the paralytic gave assurance that Jesus could energize the palsied will, and the raising of Lazarus was but a shadow picture of what the Mighty One is ever doing in bringing forth those who are dead in trespasses and sins from the dark sepulchre of an endless despair into newness of life. The messengers whom John the Baptist sent to ask, "Art thou he that cometh? or look we for another?" were told to stand aside and see what they should see. Then, after Jesus had wrought wonders before them, he said, "Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them."

V. His death. This is the living center of the gospel. All prophecies, all mythological legends, all the intuitive longings of the sinful race call for the vicarious death of the Messiah. Prometheus, chained to the rock with the vulture gnawing at his vitals, cries out, "I must endure this until one of the gods shall come and bear it for me." The penalty of sin is death; as

it is written, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." If the Messiah is to deliver the race from its penalty, he must die for it. So here we witness Jesus staggering up the slope of Calvary under the burden of his cross—a mighty Atlas bearing a world of sin upon him. The infidel Rousseau was forced to pay involuntary tribute to the character of Jesus in this pre-eminent act of self-sacrifice. He says, "The death of Socrates, peacefully philosophizing among friends, appears the most agreeable that one could wish: while that of Jesus, expiring in agonies, abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that one could fear. Socrates, indeed, in receiving the cup of hemlock, blessed the weeping executioner who administered it; but Jesus, amidst excruciating tortures, prayed for his merciless tormentors. Yes, verily, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God."

VI. His resurrection from the dead. This, also, appears in the universal foregleam of Messiah. He, who is to deliver the world from death, cannot himself be subject to it. The Holy One must not "see corruption"; his soul must not be left in Sheol. The resurrection of Jesus is God's amen put upon his redemptive work. In this we, who have fellowship with Christ, triumph over death and hell; as it is written, "Now hath Christ been raised from the death, the first fruits of them that are asleep. Then shall

come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O death, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

VII. His abiding presence. The crowning proof of the Messiahship of Jesus lies in the fact that, having finished the work of his ministry, he did not abandon the world to its fate, but took up his abode among us. He organized the Church through which he now administers his redemptive work by the influence of his Spirit, and will continue so to do until the kingdoms of this world shall become his own. This is the "philosophy of history." The cross of Jesus leads the march of progress. Civilization is but the brighter shining of his face. All things are moving on in a celestial order toward that golden age in which Jesus shall reign where'er the sun does his successive journeys run.

XVII.

HIS MEDIATORSHIP.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.
John i. 51.

I believe no man ever looked calmly and judicially into the face of Jesus Christ without yielding an assent to his superhuman claims. Philip answered the skepticism of Nathanael by saying merely "Come and see"; and when the latter, with a mind free from bias and open to conviction, interviewed Jesus, the result was a foregone conclusion.

The words with which the Master saluted him revealed a profound insight into his character; and when he went on to show his acquaintance with Nathanael in his retirement under the fig tree, the man was overwhelmed with sudden conviction; "Rabbi," he exclaimed, "thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel."

The answer of Jesus is full of significance, "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee underneath the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than

these. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.*" (John i. 51.)

Here is the setting forth of one of the most important and comforting truths of the Gospel, namely, the Mediatorship of Christ. All other interpretations of this Verily, such as a reference to the transfiguration or the ascension, fall far short. Our Lord means to say that he is the connecting link between earth and heaven; the Mediator, the Days-man, the Restorer; who, with one hand lifted to the Father's throne, and another stretched out to sinners, brings the Creator and the creature into *at-one-ment* through his gospel of reconciliation; thus realizing the Homeric dream of "the binding of this world as with gold chains about the feet of God."

To this end he presents himself as *Theanthropos*, or God-man. He must be man, as Anselm argues, that he may be able to suffer; and he must also be God, that he may suffer enough for all.

The two historic titles of the Messiah were "Son of God," and "Son of man." Let it be observed that when Nathanael addressed Jesus as "the Son of God," the latter did not disavow it, but immediately spoke of himself as also "the Son of man." His divinity and humanity, are alike necessary to his Mediatorial office. He is "very God of very God" and also very man of very man.

And how picturesquely he presents this truth! Had

he used the terminology of theological schools, or of the Ecclesiastical Councils in which this doctrine of his Mediatorship was subsequently formulated, the probability is that Nathanael and others like him would have been plunged into a quagmire of doubt and wonderment; but this was not his method. He was the great Kindergartner, teaching the wise as if they were children, in "object lessons" which he called parables. As he enforced the truth of the atonement upon the mind of the rabbi Nicodemus by a reference to the brazen serpent, so here he illustrates his Mediatorship by the familiar story of Jacob's ladder.

And where could a closer parallel be found? Jacob went out from his father's house a lonely fugitive, and, lighting upon a certain place, he made him a pillow of stones and lay down to sleep. Alone! Exiled from home, pursued by just anger, sensible of guilt, wondering whether God had forsaken him. Then came the wonderful dream; "a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven, and the angels of God ascending and descending on it."

Are we to understand, then, that Jesus affirms the ministry of angels? Why not? "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for them that shall inherit salvation?" It is a blessed truth; and such perversions as spiritualism and saint-worship must not drive us from it. But observe, the ladder is Christ. There would be no commerce of any sort be-

tween earth and heaven, were it not for his Mediatorship. All pleasant thoughts that bind us to the skies, all hopes of reunion with those who have gone before, and all their possible ministries in our behalf are due to his redemptive work and vitally associated with his intercession for us.

By way of this ladder we must return to God. "Neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."

By the same Mediatorship of Jesus we are sustained in Christian life and service. For here is the token of his perpetual imminence: "No one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the Son of man, who is in heaven." He is there, here, everywhere; with us alway, even unto the end of the world. So that we bear no cross alone, confront no temptation alone, meet no obligations alone, bear no burdens alone. "The yoke is always for two." No task can be onerous when we feel that he helps us to discharge it. Self-dependence makes us weak and miserable; the sense of his presence enables us to glory in tribulation. Joseph of Arimathea must have rejoiced under his cross when he felt the touch of the great Cross-bearer beside him. "I can do all through Christ which strengtheneth me." It is never I alone who strive and suffer; but always Christ and I.

And our prayers are offered in his name. The word of power is "for Jesus' sake." The angels going up, as it were, with prayer and coming down with blessing,

make their journeys through him. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. Our unworthy petitions—"and we do often pray to our own harms"—are sifted through his wisdom and love. We on our knees may make a mistake, but he on his throne never. This makes it quite safe for us to pray, and in our prayers to unbosom ourselves to God.

The consummation of his Mediatorship will be seen on the Great Day. He will stand as our advocate before the throne of justice. He will assume our place and answer for us. Were we to enter a plea for ourselves it must be "Guilty"; but pleading in our behalf his word is "Pardoned." Then, clothed with the garment of his imputed righteousness, we shall enter into his joy. And what a song we shall raise to our Mediator in that day; "Not unto us, not unto us, O Lord; but unto thy great name be the glory."

XVIII.

A PROPHET IN HIS OWN COUNTRY.

Verily I say unto you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country. Luke iv. 24.

THE people of Nazareth were eager to see and hear Jesus. Many things had happened since he had closed his carpenter shop and gone forth on his ministry. They never supposed that a townsman of theirs would achieve such renown; for his name was now upon every lip. Wherever he had been he had created a sensation by his wonderful words and works. So when he made his appearance in the synagogue at the Sabbath service all eyes were turned upon him: and when he rose to expound the Scriptures all were on the *qui vive* to hear what he would say. He turned, in the scroll of Isaiah, to the lesson of the day: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke iv. 18–19.) He proceeded to apply this Messianic proph-

ecy to himself, saying "To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears!"

And they wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. But their impression was a fleeting one; prejudice soon asserted its sway, and wonder and admiration gave place to unbelief. "Is not this Joseph's son?" they began to ask. "Did we not play with him in childhood? Has he not mended our furniture and made our plows? How, then, can he be the Messiah? This is preposterous? We know him too well."

All of which he answered by quoting a familiar proverb, "*Verily I say unto you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country.*" (Luke iv. 24.) The immediate application of these words is apparent; but this does not exhaust their meaning. They suggest a general proposition, far-reaching, practical, and of sufficient importance to warrant the use of the Verily, to wit, there is danger in an intimate acquaintance with truth.

We have it set forth in certain proverbs of our time, such as, "No man is a hero to his valet," "Familiarity breeds contempt," "Distance lends enchantment to the view," "Blessings brighten as they take their flight."

The privilege enjoyed by the members of the household at Nazareth, in knowing Jesus in the routine of common life, was of inestimable value, but it had its drawbacks. It created a natural prejudice against his

supernatural claims. No doubt his kinsfolk would have agreed as to his unusual purity of character; but that was a very different thing from admitting his divinity. So it is written, "His brethren believed not on him."

The poet Coleridge in the Vale of Chamonix was so overwhelmed by the stupendous beauty of the landscape that ice plains and mountain-torrents seemed to be echoing "God!" But had a herdsman, born and bred in the valley, been asked what voices he heard, his answer would probably have been, "The bleating of my sheep and lowing of my cattle." There is always the danger that moral as well as natural beauty may grow commonplace on intimate acquaintance. Wherefore the warning of Jesus was not without cause.

We who have been trained in Christian homes have special need of caution. We learned about Christ at our mother's knees. We sat in the village church and heard the story of the crucifixion until it became an oft-told tale. How is it with us now? Are we like the people at Calvary who "stood beholding?" When Antony discoursed to the populace over the dead body of Cæsar he so aroused their emotions by pointing at the cloak, blood-stained and rent by the assassins' daggers, that there was an immediate outcry for vengeance. Surely the tragedy of Golgotha should have an equally profound effect on those who believe themselves to be saved through it. But how stolid our hearts, how slow the current of our grief!

It is related of an ancient king that when he heard of Christ's crucifixion for the first time, he cried, "Had I been there I would have led my army of Franks to the rescue!" But we have heard it so often! "O foolish Galatians," writes Paul, "who did bewitch you; before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified?"

The same fact is evident in our attitude toward the Scriptures. One would suppose that the old Book would be all the more precious by reason of the memories that gather about it; but this is one of the reasons urged in these days for rejecting it. The written Word, like the incarnate Word, is "not without honor save in its own country." The heathen hear it gladly. Its truths are to them as good news from a far country. But we "know it by heart;" the Twenty-third Psalm, the Fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, the Fourteenth of John, the Eighth of Romans are at our finger-tips; and alas, how is the fine gold dimmed! The very fact that our fathers and mothers touched the Bible with reverent hands and left the stain of their grateful tears upon its pages, is urged against it. We are admonished "to steer clear of the traditional view," and to receive with caution the truths to which our early teaching inclines us.

The zest of public worship is liable to wear off in the same way. How often the aged and bed-ridden lament the loss of Church privileges, and how frequently we hear it said, under such circumstances, "Oh,

I never appreciated the blessing until I lost it!" On a hunting trip in the Dakotas, some years ago, I came upon a town where public worship was almost an unknown privilege. My consent to preach on the following Sunday was announced among the farmers of the surrounding country. Some were there who had not heard a sermon for years; I have never had a more attentive or eager congregation. Far different is the habit of many professing Christians who live where churches abound. How reluctant, oftentimes, their attendance; how languid their interest. Are they surfeited by overmuch privilege?

> "Strange we never prize the music
> Till the sweet voiced bird is flown;
> Strange that we should slight the violets
> Till the lovely flowers are gone;
> Strange that Summer skies and sunshine
> Never seem one half so fair,
> As when Winter's snowy pinions
> Shake the white down in the air!"

And the old hymns, too, grow commonplace by usage. The very associations that should make them precious seem to depreciate them, as coins passing from hand to hand lose the image and superscription of the king. Take note of the congregation when "Coronation" is sung; or "When I survey the Wondrous Cross," or "Jesus, Lover of my Soul," or "Nearer my God to Thee." Time was when these old hymns were new; then they were sung with tears. What has happened? Ah, like the prophet in his own country, they have

passed in and out among us so long and exchanged "Good morning" with us so often!

What shall we do to regain the lost fervor? Think! Gaze fixedly at the cross until "the eye affecteth the heart." Muse; while we are musing the fire burns. Keep in constant vital touch with God. Without this, prayer itself becomes a perfunctory duty, "hosannas languish on our tongues and our devotion dies."

The people of Nazareth were "offended" (literally, scandalized) at Jesus because his presence was so familiar. That presence had in it the possibility of unspeakable blessing; but it was of no advantage to them. Well might Christ emphasize the danger of high privilege. To whom much is given, of him shall much be required. What manner of persons ought they to be who know all about Christ, live in an atmosphere of religious truth, and have easy access to the Oracles and the mercy seat! Let us take heed to ourselves least it be said of us that we were "anear the kirk, afar frae God."

XIX.

OUR GREATER WORKS.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father. John xiv. 12.

It is recorded of Jesus that, as he approached the cross, "having loved his own, he loved them unto the end." He gathered the disciples in the upper room, and sought to comfort them in view of their impending sorrow. One of the great promises given on that occasion, as a ground of consolation, was this, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father.* (John xiv. 12.)

The work accomplished by Jesus during his earthly ministry when viewed in itself was almost insignificant. A few sick people healed of their infirmities; a few sermons preached on great spiritual truths; a few disciples recruited from among the laboring class in an humble province of a remote corner of the earth; a few sinners saved from sin. That was all.

But this work, as a preparation for what should follow, was of immeasurable importance. The evidential value of the miracle was destined to be felt through all subsequent ages. The doctrines and precepts set forth in Christ's preaching were to furnish the basis of Christianity. The Twelve, "a feeble folk like the conies," were the nucleus of a church now numbering some hundreds of millions of souls. The tragedy on Golgotha, apparently an ignominious ending of a troubled life, was the laying of the blood-cemented foundations of a world wide kingdom.

And the work goes on. The cross did not conclude it. In his last interview with his disciples Jesus said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And again he said, "Ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts i. 8.) This means that he, seated at the right hand of power, is working through his people for the conquest of the world.

It is not strange, therefore, that he said, "The works that I do shall ye do also, and greater works than these shall ye do," since he himself is really do-

ing the works which we, merely as his agents, seem to do. His apostles had power to work miracles like his. In their preaching they did but repeat his words, yet with what stupendous results! In his whole ministry he did not win one tenth as many converts as Peter did on the single day of Pentecost. And there have been many pentecostal ingatherings in the history of the Church. Think of Paul's missionary harvests; and of the mighty things accomplished by missionaries and evangelists in every age.

Let it be remembered, however, that all these "greater works" are the works of Christ himself working through men. Who is Paul or Apollos or Cephas? Who is Wesley or Whitefield or Moody? Christ is all. He sowed the seed of which we reap the harvests. He laid the foundations of the temple in the building of which he is using the services of all who love and follow him. With his bleeding hand he raised the banner which leads us to world-victories. And his promise is that he will be personally with us even to the end of the present order of things. Our power is his power resting upon us and working through us.

All this because, as he said, "I go unto my Father." For when he left the world it was farewell to all the limitations of his earthly life. He went to reassume "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was."

And in going he left a great bequest to us: "Even the Spirit of Truth: whom the world cannot receive;

for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him; ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you." (John xiv. 17.) His Spirit is the executive of the present dispensation. Through him we receive the enduement of power for service. By him we accomplish these greater works. Wherefore it is of immense importance that we should, as Moody used to say, "honor the Holy Ghost." His influence is the unspeakable gift of God.

Our faith is the measure of our power. "He that believeth on me"—this is the condition of our accomplishing the greater works. Faith removes mountains by bringing us into vital touch with omnipotence. There is no limit. "Of myself I can do nothing; but, "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me."

It was, doubtless, with this in mind that Paul offered his great prayer for the Christians at Ephesus, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inward man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to apprehend with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God." (Ephesians iii. 14–19.)

XX.

FAITH.

Verily I say unto to you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. Matt. viii. 10.

Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you. Matt. xvii. 20.

Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do what is done to the fig-tree, but even if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, it shall be done. Matt. xxi. 21.

In one of President Woolsey's sermons to the students at Yale, he says, "The power of what is called Faith, regarded simply as a motive to action, without respect to the reality of its object, is now admitted on all hands."

But what is Faith? The "assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." Even your sceptic philospher is frank to avow that a man whose creed is bounded by the possibilities of touch and eyesight is at best an untrustworthy, mayhap, a baneful man. The great inspirations are breathed into us by forces immaterial. The believer is the

only productive toiler. Though his faith be affixed to nothing better than specters and chimeras yet is he uplifted and energized by it. "If this be a delusion," said one of the saints, "do not undeceive me! Among these shadows let me live and die." If we must choose between the malarial swamps of materialism and the high altitudes where Brockens are beckoning from every cloud, let us, by all means, abide on the mountain-tops. Better be a transcendental dreamer than a man with a muck-rake. Better have Napoleon's faith in the Star of Destiny than no faith at all.

But suppose our faith takes hold on eternal actualities? Ah, then, what genial lamps illuminate the soul! What kindly eyes, clear as stars of the blue heaven, look into ours! What arms uphold us!

Here is the line dividing between superstition and religion. One is a blinking and groping after phosphorescent lights; the other is a climbing toward the lit windows of the Father's house; one is ghost-worship, the other is God-worship, that is, of the true and living One. It is well to say, "I believe;" but better still to say, "I know him whom I have believed and I am persuaded that he is able to guard that which I have committed unto him." An anchor the soul must have, though it never touch the ocean's bed, but Oh, if it be sure and steadfast, taking hold of that which is within the veil! This is religion. The holding fast of the soul; its return from dreams and visions to things matter-of-fact.

And here is where the earnest life begins. There is no living until faith has reached out and taken hold of the unseen. Though a man get all the wisdom of the schools, though his barns be full, though his honors be thick upon him, yet, failing in this, like the young ruler, he lacks the one thing needful.

Faith is living among the realities. It is putting things at their right relative value. It is placing the emphasis on facts as against fancies, on realities as against phantasms. It is making room for God and giving him his proper place in the economy of life. A man of faith is larger than his shop or his office; he is larger than his environment; he refuses to live within a world circumscribed by the physical senses. He sees things that lie beyond the range of fleshly eyes. He touches things that cannot be reached by the finger tips. To him things visible are but a passing show: "the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." Gold, pleasure, laurel wreaths are shadows; he counts them as naught: realities are all.

Here is the secret of the triumphant life. The immortals endure as seeing him who is invisible. They shake off the dust of a world that dies, and journey on to a better country, even an heavenly. They believe! Take faith out of the lives of the ancient worthies in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews and what have you? They are no better than Nimrod and Belshazzar and Darius and Meneptah; a procession of names and

grotesque figures on marble slabs and monuments. They lived, they died! The roll-call is hollow as the beating of a drum. Wherein does Moses differ from Xerxes? Both alike lashed the sea; but Moses lashed it in the name of God. Wherein does Rahab differ from Aspasia? Both were harlots. Aspasia reasoned with philosophers; but Rahab trusted in the divine convenant in token whereof she let down from her window the scarlet thread. Wherein was Samson better than Hercules? Did not both rend the jaws of lions? Aye; but the long, braided locks of Samson were the symbol of his faith; shear those locks, and he is weak as other men.

This is the differentiating line which runs through all human life, to separate the dying from the immortal. If men, who are raised to places of authority, rule for God, they rule for ever; if not, they are laid away in the cemeteries of the pigmies. If men of wealth make to themselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness by using it as a solemn trust for the welfare of their fellow men, then are they by faith rich toward God; if not, they die like one of whom a recent editorial in one of our newspapers said, "The frog's legs that were served upon his table have as just a title to immortality as he."

How shall we explain this power of faith? Wherefore should a man be chosen here and there from the common herd and immortalized? The reason is clear. To begin with, it brings a man into touch with God.

There is no other way of approach to God; as it is written, "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him." To bring one's soul into line with the divine will is to find one's self, and to assume an attitude of power. I am a cipher; but when I move up against the great Unit, I am ten, a hundred, a thousand, if you will; and herein I fulfil the prediction, "One shall put ten thousand to flight."

I recently saw a tug in the New York Bay drawing six barges of iron; the rope by which it was fastened to them was powerless in itself, yet they could not move without it. So faith couples the soul with God; and, binding us to omnipotence, it makes us laborers together with God.

Then follows self-respect. A man perceives God now, not as an abstraction but as Immanuel, "God with us." He looks into the face of Jesus, reads there the story of pardoning grace, and accepts it. The sin that shamed him is blotted out. He reads the blood-atonement as Abel, standing beside his primeval altar, read it. He enters into "the reproach of Christ" as Moses entered into it. He sees the day of Messiah as Abraham "saw it and was glad." An infinite vista of possibilities is opened before him. He moves up to the side of the "first-born among many brethren," who said, "As the Father sent me so send I you." Life has new meanings for him. He lives no longer as one of the ephemera. Knowing that he dies not "as

the beast dieth," he measures his life by corresponding responsibility.

Thus he necessarily puts a new emphasis on truth. For truth is the basis of conduct; since "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." He longs to solve the mighty problems that reach out into the eternal æons. "There are so many voices and none of them is without signification" for him. He turns to his Bible, and searches it as for hid treasure. He sits at the feet of Jesus and learns of him. He hears him teaching, "not as the Scribes but as one having authority;" and he takes him at his word. Doubt is dispelled, —the doubt "that makes us lose the good we oft might win by fearing to attempt." With vanishing doubt fear takes its flight. Faith feeds on faith. Thus he advances "from strength to strength" in the symmetrical building of character. He moves away from such timorous phrases as "I guess" or "I wonder" to "I know" and "I believe."

And in this sacred quest of truth, duty becomes supreme.

> "So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When Duty whispers low, Thou must,
> The youth replies, I can!"

He hears his Master saying, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do. As he looks toward eternity, the fear of death vanishes; for death is but

"the covered bridge, leading from light to light, through a brief darkness." And, more and more, the seriousness of life grows upon this man; since life is the season given for preparation for eternity. To live for eternity is, to him, another way of saying, "Live to-day!"

So faith, in brief, lifts him above his sordid environment. He is no longer the creature of circumstance. He is "in the world but not of it." He can endure sorrow, because it worketh for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He prepares himself for trial by drinking water out of the King's well. He confronts difficulties as did the priests, who walked around Jericho blowing rams' horns: and difficulties, like the walls of Jericho, fall down flat before him. His conflict with temptation is like the historic battle which was fought on Lookout Mountain with the clear of heaven above and the storm clouds far beneath. The world is so little now! Heaven so fair, eternity so vast! Duty is so important, character so inestimable! God has been taken into the reckoning; and God, and the verities which center in him, are all in all.

This is the victory that overcometh the world, even your faith. Here is the secret of courage, of optimism and of final triumph. If God be for us, who can be against us?

It was meet and proper therefore, that Jesus should put the emphasis of his Verily on the importance of Faith. At the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration

the disciples were put to shame because they were unable to heal a demoniac boy. The Lord came down into their midst, his face shining, and looking upon his disciples he said, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I bear with you?" Then he restored the lad; and afterwards when the disciples asked him, "Why could not we cast it out?" he answered, "Because of your little faith." And as they continued their journey, he said "*Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove.*" A grain of mustard seed was the symbol of littleness, but the mustard seed had in it the power of life. The lifting of a mountain was the symbol of impossibility, but all things are possible to him who believes. This is not rhetoric; not hyperbole; it is truth. If our faith were perfect, it would always be buttressed by the omnipotence of God.

A little living faith has in it the potency of vast achievement; but thrice blessed is the possessor of great faith. Such was the centurion of Capernaum. (Matt. viii. 10.) On hearing that Jesus was coming to town he went to meet him; and this colloquy ensued:

The Centurion: "Lord, my servant lieth in the house sick of the palsy, grievously tormented." (Not a word of entreaty. He knew about Jesus evidently, and believed in him so far as to take his power and goodness for granted.)

Jesus: "I will come and heal him." (No hesitation. He instantly honors the faith of this man.)

The Centurion: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof; but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed." (Faith in "absent treatment." He believed in the omnipresence of Jesus as well as in his omnipotence. But let him continue:) "For I also am a man under authority, having under myself soldiers: and I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it." (Showing that his faith was rational, resting on the argument known as *a fortiori*, that is, from the less to the greater.)

Jesus: (to his disciples) "*Verily, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel!*" (Then to the Centurion.) "Go thy way; as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

This was great faith for many reasons: (1) It was in an unexpected quarter. The Gentiles knew little about Jesus. (2) It was in spite of other adverse circumstances. The man was a soldier, exposed to the irreligious dangers of a rough, cruel life. (3) It was an unselfish faith, not in his own behalf but in that of a humble slave. (4) It was a reasonable faith, founded on a strong, analogical argument. (5) It was a bold, expectant, persistent faith. (6) It took hold on Jesus as the mighty Son of God. (7) It was fruitful in results: "And his servant was healed in the self-same hour."

What is the conclusion of the whole matter? "Only believe!" We enter the kingdom by faith. We walk by faith. The just shall live by faith. All things are possible to him that believeth. "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

XXI.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name. John xvi. 23.

At one of our military posts on the frontier, an old Indian was often found, hungry and in rags and tatters, begging of the soldiers a little to keep soul and body together. And they were used to his approaches, for he had been coming year after year in that way. At length one felt moved to inquire what it was that hung from an old ribbon about the Indian's neck. A locket was suspended there; and when he opened the locket, there fell out a bit of parchment; that parchment was a Revolutionary pension bearing the signature of George Washington, the Commander-in-Chief of the American Army, which entitled him to a comfortable competence during all the remainder of his days. And he had not known it!

Here is a promise for Christian people: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name.*"

In this Verily we have a draft on the bank of the

Kingdom, signed by the King himself, with the amount left blank for us to fill in, and absolutely no limitations or conditions affixed to it. Have we taken advantage of it? If we had, we should not be going about mourning, "Oh, my leanness! my leanness!" God intends us to be strong and enriched by his grace, with enough of everything that is needful in order to the satisfaction of our souls to the uttermost. "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

All prayer is answered; all prayer, mind you, offered in the filial spirit—for nothing else is prayer. The true prayer is that which goes up from the heart of God's child to the throne of heavenly grace; which begins with "Our Father," and ends with "For Jesus' sake." That gets hold upon the strength of God, and nothing is impossible to it. So our proposition is the boundless prayer of faith; absolutely, literally, the boundless prayer of faith. It rests on three boundless facts. Here they are:

The first is the boundless power of God. He has infinite resources at his command. Why should not he give us whatsoever we ask? Do you feel the hand of death gripping at your heart-strings? Has some mortal malady taken hold upon you? And has the physician said, "Nothing can be done?" I believe in the faith cure: not in the professional charlatanry using that phrase; but in the power of the prayer of faith to do precisely what it did when Jesus went along the highways in the Holy Land. "If I do but touch

his garment, I shall be made whole." It was the touch of absolute faith that got hold of the hem of his garment, when virtue went out of him.

Are you in distress respecting your temporal estate? Oh, the cattle on a thousand hills are his, and all the gold and silver that lie buried in the deep bosom of the everlasting mountains,—they are all his. What an easy matter it is for God to relieve us!

Do you want to grow in grace toward the full stature of the manhood of Christ? He encourages that desire, and is ready at the first impulse of your heart to grant it.

Are you praying for a friend? Pray on! God loves an unselfish prayer. He can reach out anywhere to save a soul. How easy it is for him! If one of my dear ones was over yonder struggling in the water for life, and you were near by, and could reach out a hand, and I should call to you, "Oh, save him!" would you hesitate? Why shall God hesitate when I plead for the deliverance of my beloved from spiritual and eternal death?

Do you say, "True, but his laws stand in the way?" Can a watchmaker adjust the machinery of a chronometer and turn the hands backward, if he will; and shall not God be able to manage the machinery of the universe? The laws of the universe are God's laws. The universe is his chronometer. "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon! and thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon!" There was a man named Joshua praying

down yonder, and God moved through the laws of the universe, and answered him.

And then, this boundless prayer of faith rests on a second fact, the boundless goodness of God. He is able; is he willing? His name is love. Oh, the length, and the breadth, and the depth, and the height of it!

> "There's a wideness in God's mercy
> Like the wideness of the sea."

His *promise*, also, is given. "Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." There is not an "if" there; not a "perhaps"; nor "it may be so." "It *shall* be opened unto you." And, as if he thought some of us might question his sincerity in making so vast a promise, he immediately repeats it in this wise: "For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Besides, we have an argument back of that promise —a great argument, *a fortiori*, from the less to the greater—so that we may not misunderstand or question it. "And, of which of you that is a father shall his son ask a loaf, and he give him a stone? or a fish, and he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them that ask him."

And then, in addition to all that, his name, his promise, his argument, he adds the tremendous earnest

which we have in Jesus Christ, when he says, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" He bared his heart, took the very heart of his love out of his bosom, and cast it down upon this guilty world to save it. Now, "shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

It is nothing for him to give. He delights to give. It is the joy of the Divine life to be giving all the while. The most delightsome day in the life of the Empress Josephine, as she wrote in one of her letters, was when coming through the Alps with her husband, she was left for a little while to rest in an humble cottage. She saw that the eyes of the lone woman there were stained with tears and asked her trouble. The woman said it was poverty. "How much," asked Josephine, "would relieve it?" "Oh," she said, "there is no relieving it; it would require four hundred francs to save our little vineyard and our goats." Josephine counted out of her purse the four hundred francs into the woman's lap; and she gathered them together, and fell down and kissed her feet. And that was the happiest day in that poor empress's life. But all God's life is filled with days like that. His name is Love. He delights to hear our prayer, to answer it, to relieve and to enrich us.

This boundless prayer of faith rests upon yet a third fact, to wit, God's boundless wisdom. He knows precisely what I need, and for that reason I am em-

boldened to ask. I would not dare to ask if he were no wiser than myself. I would not dare to kneel down and ask for a temporal gift that might be to my moral and eternal ruin. I cannot see beyond my finger tips, but I can trust him. My Father knows; knows what is best for me. "But if he knows before the asking what I need, why should I make a prayer at all?" That is the word of an objector who has never learned God's love in Jesus Christ. It is enough for us that he bids us keep up the constant current of communication between our hearts and himself. "Ask, and it shall be given you."

Ask largely. The prayer of faith knows no limit. Be not afraid. Your large request honors every attribute of God. In one of the Psalms it is written, "Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it." I wonder if the figure came from David's life among the hills, where, watching from the cliffs, he saw the fledglings in the eagle's nest, saw them, as the mother bird came back with some rich morsel, open their bills and wait? Perhaps that suggested to him our helplessness, and God's desire to honor our requests?" Open your mouth wide and he will fill it.

Ask confidently. Be assured that he will answer you. For you are a child of God. The filial spirit is the only condition that is affixed to prayer. It is the only prerequisite, and includes all other conditions that affect our approach to the mercy seat. Pray as the son or daughter of the loving God, that is, being

mindful of his superior wisdom. You may ask a stone; he will not give it, but he will give you bread. Will you then say, "He did not answer me?" You may in lack of wisdom, ask a scorpion; he will not give you that, but he will honor your prayer, and give you a fish. Will you still say, "He did not answer me?"

The Lord Jesus once, in the weakest hour of his earthly life, when all his flesh was crying out against the approaching anguish of death, made the prayer of a real man. (And God wants us to pour out our whole soul before him. Better make a wrong prayer than no prayer at all.) In that awful hour he implored, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But, as the light of the great redemption dawned upon his soul and he saw its necessity, he went on to say, "Oh, my Father, Thy will be done!" and his prayer was answered.

The widow of a minister, long ago, came to Elijah's house and wept out her sorrow, saying "My creditors have come, and they require my two sons as a pledge. They are all that I have. My husband is dead. You knew him—you knew his devotion to God; and I am left alone with these two lads." And the prophet said, "Go back to thy home. What hast thou?" "Nothing." "Nothing?" "No; only a pot of oil; nothing else is left." "Go back to thy house, take thy two lads, and make ready the pot of oil; then borrow vessels. Borrow of all thy neighbors round about.

Borrow vessels not a few, remember ; and enter into a room with thy lads, shut to the door, and pour out oil!" And she did so ; she filled the first vessel, and the supply was not gone. "Bring me another vessel," said she to the lads ; and they brought another and she filled it ; still the oil was not stayed. Another, and another,—vessels not a few ; all that they had. "Bring me yet another!" And one said, "Mother, there is not another vessel here ;" and then the oil was stayed.

There is a full supply in God's bounty. What limits it ? Nothing but faith. God's wealth is infinite. The oil flows on forever, but the vessels give out. O for more faith ! O for a larger faith—a faith that shall honor the infinite love of the infinite God—a faith that shall rest absolutely on his unbounded power, his unbounded goodness, his unbounded wisdom, and shall believe his Word : "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you!"

XXII.

BINDING AND LOOSING.

Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Matt. xviii. 18.

HERE is a great truth—a truth which has given rise to endless controversy. In the opinion of some, the words of Jesus on this occasion gave to Peter and his apostolic associates and successors a roving commission to take general charge of divine affairs. The destinies of the race were placed in their hands. It is for them to save or damn at will. God, having devised the plan of redemption and carried it out at an infinite expenditure on Calvary, was then pleased to turn over the whole matter to human hands.

I do not believe it. There is something wrong with such an exposition of Scripture.

The revolutionary tribunal of 1794 in France had power to arrest without complaint, try without jury, and convict without witnesses; in consequence of such arbitrary exercise of power, no less than fourteen hundred victims died by the guillotine between the 10th

of June and the 27th of July in that awful year. The life of the nation was at the absolute disposal of Robespierre and his four confreres. The world stands aghast at such a concentration of power in the hands of mortal men. But this is nothing, a mere bagatelle, in comparison with the power which is said to have been committed to the hands of Peter and his associates; for this had to do not merely with the lives and estates of men, but with their eternal destiny!

The disciples did not so understand their commission. Nor did Peter himself so understand it. The nearest to the exercise of any such authority was in the case of the Simon Magus, who had played the hypocrite during a great revival at Samaria, and had offered money in return for the *charismata* or special gifts of the Spirit of God. Then Peter said, "Thy money perish with thee." And the man was filled with sudden remorse. Now was Peter's chance. What did he say? "Absolvo te!" Oh, no: "Repent and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee."

Contrast that with the thing that happened at Canossa when Henry II, who had been deposed from his royal office, came over the Alps to entreat for papal absolution. He presented himself at the gate of Gregory VII, and made his humble petition. He was ordered to remain at the gate and abstain from food; he was further ordered to strip himself of the royal purple and put on hair-cloth. At the end of three

weary days of penance, he was required to go into the presence of Pope Gregory and kiss his feet. Then this Vicar of God was pleased to say, "Absolvo te." Can it for a moment be believed that God has abdicated his prerogative in this way? Shall we not rather say that this papal assumption is a mere playing with holy things—a grim and blasphemous farce?

The claim of the Romish Church to the power of plenary absolution, with its accessories, such as the confessional, the indulgence, the anathema, extreme unction, the deliverance of souls from purgatory, rests upon a false interpretation of three passages of Holy Writ.

The first is in Matthew xvi. 13; where the keys were committed to Peter, that he might throw open the doors of the visible church to the Gentile world. This he did on the day of Pentecost, when, in the presence of a great assemblage, not of Jews only, but of Jews and Greeks, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia, and representatives from every portion of the earth, he said, "Repent ye and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all them that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him."

The second Scripture referred to is in John xx. 19–23, where our Lord said to his apostles, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye forgive, they

are forgiven unto them ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." Bear in mind the circumstances under which these words were spoken. His disciples were assembled in the upper chamber with closed doors after his resurrection, when he suddenly appeared among them, saying, " Peace be unto you." He then added, " As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you." What for? The Father had sent him into the world to deliver the world from sin, as Jesus said in the synagogue at Nazareth when he opened the Scriptures and read : " The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor : he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord ;" and continued, " To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears." As he was sent to proclaim deliverance by the power of the great sacrifice on Golgotha, so are these sent to point the nations toward the cross. Here is the only absolution ; absolution by faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And having thus spoken of their errand, he breathed on his disciples and said, " Receive ye the Holy Spirit." Here was their qualification for the great work of evangelization. And then came the words, " Whose soever sins ye forgive, they shall be forgiven ; and whose soever sins ye retain, they shall be retained." The word of every believer, who announces absolution in

Jesus Christ, is ratified in heaven. The humblest of all Christians is commissioned to go, saying, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." That is, his sin shall be remitted or retained just as he accepts or rejects the proffer of mercy in the crucified son of God.

The third Scripture referred to is in Matt. xviii. 15–18. "If thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him alone: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, tell it unto the church: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican. *Verily I say unto you, What things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*"

The power of binding and loosing, which had already been conferred upon Peter in connection with the power of the keys, is here conferred upon the apostolic circle. And inasmuch as this commission was granted in immediate connection with the question of trespass within the Church, it is obvious that it refers to Church government. It is for the appointed officers of the church to determine what rules shall prevail. This is the power of binding and loosing as

it was understood in the Jewish Church; as when it was said, "Shammai bindeth and Hillel looseth;" or as Josephus says, with reference to certain ethical rules, "The Pharisees have power to bind and loose at will." The commission which was thus granted to the apostolic circle involved a triple function:

(1) The formulating of terms of admission to the Church. It is clear that there must be some authority to make doctrinal and ethical formularies which shall serve as conditions of church membership. And upon whom could this power be so appropriately conferred as upon that little circle which was the nucleus of the visible Church and constituted its formal government.

(2) The maintenance of order within the Church. This is done by the laying down of certain rules of right belief and conduct. This is properly called, "binding and loosing." The Council at Jerusalem was called to settle the question as to what should be required of the Gentile Christians with respect to observances which the Jewish Christians regarded as obligatory. Paul and Peter having discussed that question, James declared the judgment of the court, which was to this effect: that on the one hand the Gentile converts should abstain from pollutions of idols, from fornication, things strangled and blood; but that on the other hand, the yoke of Jewish bondage should be no further placed upon them. Here was a case in which the officers of the Church formally exercised the power of

binding and loosing, and that same power rests in our ecclesiastical judicatories at this day.

(3) The power to administer discipline. This, also, is necessary for the maintenance of order. A certain man in the Corinthian Church was accused of a nameless crime. He was probably of good social position, and his offense was winked at. Paul, however, enjoined upon the Corinthian Church to deal summarily with him; he exhorted them to meet "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ," and bind this evil doer and deliver him over to Satan in the hope of his reclamation or for the destruction of the flesh. Here was a clear case of judicial binding. It was what we call suspension or excommunication. The probability is that there ought to be a more frequent exercise of this power in the Church. A few years ago a man committed suicide in St. Paul's in London, and immediately it was announced that there would be a formal purging and reconsecration of the Church. But there are worse stains then the blood of a suicide in many of our churches, of which our ecclesiastical dignities should take knowledge; for the Church is as a city set upon a hill whose light cannot be hid.

It is obvious that neither in this nor in the former passages is there any reference to what is called judicial or plenary absolution. That power remains in divine hands; for who can forgive sins but God alone? The wrong view of this commission is illustrated in the claims of the monk Tetzel who set up his booth at

Jüterbok and announced that he was prepared to grant indulgences. The most heinous of crimes could be shielded from punishment by the payment of a stipulated number of florins. He proposed, also, to deliver souls from purgatory for a consideration. Over the chest, prepared for the receiving of the coins, was written this legend:

> "Soon as the coin within this chest doth ring,
> The soul shall straightway into heaven spring."

How blasphemous! And how puerile! What a preposterous interpretation of the Master's words! And from a similar perversion have arisen all the historic crimes of the confessional and the anathema. The whole race of Huguenots was placed under the ban; cursed in soul, body and estate; doomed to death temporal and eternal. The tolling of the bells of St. Bartholomew's marked the climax of this frightful misinterpretation of the teaching of Jesus.

XXIII.

MUTUAL SERVICE.

Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them.

Luke xii. 37.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, A servant is not greater than his Lord; neither one that is sent greater than he that sent him.

John xiii. 16.

We have two strikingly contrasted pictures in John xiii. 1–17 and Luke xii. 31–40. One represents a scene in the upper room in Jerusalem, where Jesus, girt with a towel and basin in hand, is washing his disciples' feet. The other represents the great Supper in the Kingdom, where he, no longer clad in peasant's garb but arrayed in kingly apparel, seats his redeemed guests at table and "cometh forth and serveth them." The fact emphasized is the Dignity of Service.

It is a mistake to think of Christ's extreme kindness to sinners as an evidence of demeaning condescension; on the contrary it was but an illustration of that true greatness which finds its highest expression in the saying, "God is love."

To regard service as humiliating is a distinctly human conception. God is the Great Servant and he is, by that very token, King over all and blessed forever. In this connection we recall Milton's definition of humility, "That lofty lowliness of mind which is exalted by its own humiliation."

It is recorded that on their way to the upper room the disciples had disputed as to which should be greatest among them. They were anticipating the establishment of an earthly kingdom and their hearts were filled with selfish and envious thoughts of temporal emolument. This was what led to the foot-washing; and what a mighty, persuasive, convincing demonstration of the greatness of service it was! Then came the application, with the double emphasis, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, A servant is not greater than his Lord, neither one that is sent greater than he that sent him.*" (John xiii. 16.) Bow your heads, all followers of Christ. Lower! Lower! He bowed to service and so must ye, if ye would sit together with him on his throne; for he that humbleth himself shall be exalted and he that exalteth himself shall be abased.

The other picture, the serving of Christ at the heavenly table, was suggested by the impertinent request of a young man: "Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me." Of course the Lord refused. Why should he be "a judge or a divider" in such matters? This selfishness is ever breaking in upon the larger considerations of life. Give, give, give!

"Bid my brother divide!" Divide what? A little yellow dust that is bound to sift through stiff fingers at last. No, no, said Jesus, this is not the true view of living. Living is not claiming one's own but dividing with others; not standing on rights but glorying in privileges; not mastery but ministry; not getting but giving; not striving but serving. Let the mind that was and is forever in Christ Jesus be also in us. "*Verily I say unto, that he shall gird himself, and make his servants sit down to meat, and will come and serve them.*" (Luke xii. 37.)

It would appear from these two pictures of Jesus that he is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever. The human nature which he assumed in the incarnation was not laid aside when he ascended into heaven. John saw him walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks and was so overawed that he "fell at his feet as one dead;" but Jesus reassured him, saying, "I am the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore"; that is, he was the same Christ on whose bosom John had leaned in the upper room. And this thought is emphasized in the two pictures before us. The Christ who showed by the foot-washing that he had come into the world "not to be ministered unto but to minister," still serves his disciples as they sit at meat in his heavenly kingdom. Thus his humiliation, so-called, is the perpetual token of his glory.

If so, it follows that our Christlikeness is measured

by our growth in this spirit of ministry. He has set us an example, that we should do unto one another as he has done unto us, and as he is for ever doing unto them that love him.

This is not an easy lesson to learn. The natural heart is selfish. It is loath to minister, insisting rather on being ministered unto. We who profess to follow Christ are often more concerned about our own salvation than in saving others. We love to sing,

> "When I can read my title clear
> To mansions in the skies,
> I'll bid farewell to every fear
> And wipe my weeping eyes."

Yet the getting of a "title clear" is only the beginning of the Christian life. All the rest is service; that is, the wiping of other weeping eyes.

We are much troubled about "the deepening of the spiritual life;" forgetting that the spiritual life is not deepened by a selfish dead-lift, so much as by following Christ in doing good, as we have opportunity, unto all men.

The joy of heaven is service. We are not to think of the angels as employing themselves chiefly in playing harps and singing hymns. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" Is there not joy in heaven among the angels of God over every sinner returning from the error of his ways?

"Jehovah's charioteers surround;
The ministerial choir
Encamp where'er his heirs are found
And form our wall of fire:
Ten thousand offices unseen
For us they gladly do,
Deliver in the lion's den
And safe escort us through."

If, then, we are to enter into the goodly fellowship of angels and saints triumphant, it behooves us to be faithful in our apprenticeship in service here and now. Our Lord himself, in taking this attitude of service, strikes the keynote of the Christian life. If, girt with omnipotence and canopied in glory, he deigns to serve his people, we shall best grow into his likeness not by mere sentimentalizing about sanctification but by doing for each other as he is continually doing for us.

XXIV.

HIS KIND FORESIGHT.

Verily I say unto you, One of you shall betray me, even he that eateth with me. Mark xiv. 18.

Verily I say unto thee, that thou to-day, even this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice. Mark xiv. 30.

Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. John xxi. 18.

The all-embracing love of Jesus is manifest in his warnings, invitations and prayers in behalf of all sorts and conditions of men. What a wonderful thing it was that, amid the exquisite tortures of the cross, he should plead for his murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Yet this was of a piece with his entire life and character.

On the night before his crucifixion he showed his profound interest in the welfare of Judas. He knew what was in the traitor's heart and, moved, with a desire to forewarn and admonish him, he said in his hearing before the assembled company, *Verily I say unto you, One of you shall betray me, even he that eateth with me.*"

(Mark xiv. 18.) The disciples were profoundly moved by his words; and they all, Judas among them, began to inquire, "Is it I?" How deep and irremediable must have been the disloyalty of this man! Warned on the brink of the abyss, he made no pause. Despite the faithful admonition of One who knew his inmost heart and foresaw his frightful doom, he plunged headlong on the bosses of the shield of God.

The taste of the sacramental wine and bread was on his lips, when he went out of the upper chamber and betook himself to the Hall of Caiaphas. There he bargained with the rulers to betray his Lord for thirty pieces of silver. They were eager to receive him. This was the very chance for which they had waited long.

"When," they asked him, "wilt thou deliver him into our hands?"

"This very night."

"And where?"

"He is on his way, at this moment, to the garden of the oil-press, on the slope of Olivet. I know the place well. He is accustomed to resort thither for meditation and prayer. I will lead you."

They set forth, guards, rabbis, and a mob with swords and staves and lanterns. The traitor was in front. He led them at a quick pace down the path to the Kidron and up along the slope of the opposite hill. They entered the gate of the garden. There Judas turned and said, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that

is he; take him." So they passed on until they came to the grove of the oil-press. In the dim light of the moon they saw him yonder, and Judas, rushing headlong to his ruin, drew near and threw his arms about him. "Hail, Master!" he cried, and kissed him. The word here used is that of a lover and a maid—he kissed him eagerly, again and again. In that kiss, his crime reached its consummation. It marked a sin against light, a sin against warning. It was treachery, it was *lesé majesté*, it was guilt of the deepest, darkest dye.

We have reason to believe that if Judas Iscariot, at any moment before his death, had sought God's mercy he would have found it. His sin was not beyond pardon. God is a great Forgiver, willing to forgive unto the uttermost all who come unto him. It is never too late to mend. As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that all should turn and live. Turn ye! turn ye! for why will ye die?

On that same night, in the upper room, our Lord said to Peter, "*Verily I say unto thee, that thou to-day, even this night, before the cock crow twice, shalt deny me thrice.*" (Mark xiv. 30.) As in the case of Judas, he took occasion of his foreknowledge to admonish this man of his approaching danger. The warning was in vain. True, Peter was not, like Judas, cherishing a deliberate purpose of evil; but, being off his guard, the very danger of which he had been so kindly and solemnly forewarned overtook him.

It is a sad story, and we search in vain for extenuating circumstances. Bring it before any jury of tried men and true, and their verdict would be "Guilty," without a recommendation to mercy. The case is aggravated by the fact that Peter had probably a deeper insight than any of his companions into the personality of Jesus; it was he who had witnessed the good confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He was one of the chosen three who were received into the inner place of the Lord's confidence. He had been with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration: had seen the homespun garments of the Nazarene flutter aside, revealing his royal purple. In view of such considerations, *plus* this admonition, it would appear that the offense could scarcely have been worse. Being forewarned, he should have been forearmed; and above all this, he knew that Christ was praying for him. (Luke xxii. 32.)

His fall was due (1) to thoughtlessness. He was an impulsive man. (2) And to self-confidence. "Although all shall be offended," he said, "yet will not I."

> "Beware of Peter's word,
> Nor confidently say,
> 'I never will deny my Lord,'
> But 'Grant I never may!'"

(3) Also to the fact that in the hour of trial he "followed Jesus afar off." When he heard in the distance the outcries of the mob who were leading his Lord to

judgment, he went skulking in the rear. If we would be secure, let us follow Christ as a tourist follows his guide along the Alpine heights, roped to him, safe in his safety, falling only when he falls. (4) Also to his association with evil companions. He stood in the open court with the soldiers and warmed his hands at their fire. "He had," as a Scotch woman quaintly said, "nae business among the flunkeys." No more have we. We must indeed be in the world, but we need not be of it. (5) But back of all other reasons for Peter's fall was his arrant cowardice. He fell before the sneer of a maidservant. O the poltroon, put to rout by a pointed finger! Had it been a leveled spear, he might have braved it; for, indeed, no weapon is fiercer than ridicule. We also blanch and tremble before it.

But the story of Peter does not end with his downfall. There is a glorious sequel. No sooner had he uttered the fateful words of denial than the cock crew; and never did chanticleer carry such a message to the heart of man. Then Peter lifting up his eyes, saw Jesus yonder in the judgment-hall; and the Lord turned and looked upon him. It was a look of reproach and infinite tenderness. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly. Then came three days of shame and self-reproach. He wandered alone in his bitter sorrow. At night he awoke from troubled dreams to hear himself saying, "I never knew him!" At length one came saying, "The Master is dead; come to the

upper room and weep with us." But he could not. "Leave me to my shame," he said. Then another reported, "Jesus is risen and hath sent a message to thee." But the nightmare of his sin was still upon him.

One morning in the twilight he was with his companions in the fishing boat, when a lone figure was seen walking on the shore. They whispered among themselves, "It is the Lord." Peter could not wait. In a passion of repentant love he threw off his fisher's coat and sprang into the water; and a moment later he stood dripping before his Lord. "Simon, son of John [alas, his old name!], lovest thou me?" "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." And again, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." Then a third time, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" And Peter said, "Lord, thou knowest all things—my sin, my shame, my remorse, my penitence—and thou knowest that I love thee!" Thus he was restored to the apostolate. And from that time he never blushed to own his Lord. He earned his knighthood as the Man of Rock. He stood before kings, met persecution with a courageous front, became a familiar acquaintance of the scourge and prison damp, braved the terrors and weariness of missionary toil, and at length went through the gate of Rome to martyrdom. A moment later as he entered on his heavenly reward, we may believe that to the gracious word of welcome he

replied, "Now, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!"

The sin of Peter in denying Jesus was in many points akin with that of the traitor. He also was overwhelmed with remorse; but his tears were mingled with faith. He so believed in the pardoning grace of Jesus that he could not be driven to despair. He sought the presence of his Lord; and this makes all the difference. The old monk Staupitz said to Luther, overwhelmed with shame, "The true repentance is that which drives the soul to God."

The kind foresight of Jesus was manifest, also, in his words touching the manner of Peter's death. This was in his interview with his disciples referred to above: "*Verily, verily I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.*" (John xxi. 18.)

It was a picturesque scene: The sun was rising over the trans-Jordanic heights, tinging the snowy crown of Hermon with a red glory, while a golden mist rose slowly from the western sea. In the midst of the group stood Jesus, and near by Peter, in dripping garments, his face now fallen on his breast. He had forgotten for the moment, that when he last saw Jesus he had thrice denied him: now the bitter recollection overwhelms him. Thrice the Master asks,

"Simon, son of John, lovest thou me?" Never was heedless lad more embarrassed by stern catechist than this bold fisherman: yet with downcast eyes he answers thrice, "Thou knowest that I love thee." And with vast compassion his Lord reopens to him the three doors of the apostolic office, saying "Feed my sheep." Then the grave announcement falls from his lips: "When thou art old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldst not." It was a prophecy of martyrdom. Did Peter blanche or tremble when the cold shadow fell over him? Nay; this was what he had longed for: to be baptized with his Lord's crimson baptism, to drink of his bitter cup. Then Jesus added, "Follow me!" He had said it twice before but never under such circumstances, nor with such grave significance. It was as if he said, "Come, Peter; the servant is not greater than his Lord. Enter into the fellowship of my shame and agony. On to the cross! On to the martyr's crown!"

Our Lord knows us through and through. He knows how we are living and how we are to die. And he is profoundly interested in our welfare every way. By the voice of his Spirit he is constantly warning and persuading us. He did what he could to save Judas. He stood by Peter to the very end, His love is round about us. "What more could he do for his vineyard that he hath not done in it?"

XXV.

CHRIST AND THE BIBLE.

Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Matt. v. 18.

Our Lord declares the Scriptures to be true. He does not scruple to call them "truth." He does not say that they contain, but that they are, the word of God. Thus in his sacerdotal prayer in behalf of his disciples he pleads, "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth." A follower of Christ ought to be willing to follow him in his indorsement of the Scriptures no less than in faithful service. He affixed his seal to the story of the Deluge, saying, "As were the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of man: they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the flood came and took them all away." He believed in the old story of the destruction of the Cities of the Plain by fire and brimstone from heaven, in the healing efficacy of the brazen serpent, in the turning of Lot's wife into a pillar of salt, and in Jonah in the whale's belly. He gave an explicit assent to those Old Testament "fables" which are so abhorrent

to many of the learned critics of these days. He was probably as well advised as most of our Biblical exegetes respecting the real facts bearing upon the question of inerrancy, and knowing all he did not hesitate to indorse the entire trustworthiness of the most vulnerable portions of Holy Writ.

At the outset of his ministry he went into the synagogue at Nazareth and opened the scroll at the place where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor: he hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord;" and having read this passage, he said to his audience, "To-day hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears." During the three years that followed he hypothecated the truth of his teaching and the genuineness of his work in all particulars on the sanction of Holy Writ. And after his resurrection, while walking with certain of his disciples along the way to Emmaus, "beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." It would be interesting to know the substance of that expository sermon. We may be quite sure that he unfolded the meaning of ancient rites and symbols as well as of Messianic prediction in the light of the things which had recently happened at Jerusalem. We may be equally sure that he care-

fully avoided any suggestion of the fact which has recently been discovered by a liberal Professor in one of our Evangelical Seminaries that "the great body of the Messianic prediction has not only never been fulfilled, but cannot now be fulfilled, for the reason that its own time has passed for ever."

The words, "*Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished,*" are, if possible, of still clearer import. Observe the manifold emphasis; the "Verily," the "I say unto you," the "till heaven and earth pass," the "one jot or one tittle," the "in no wise," and the "all." It is difficult to see how he could have expressed more forcibly his unreserved confidence in the absolute integrity of Holy Writ. He plants himself, here, on its entire truth and trustworthiness, and hypothecates his character, his preaching, his work, his passion, his resurrection and his ultimate triumph upon it.

It will be well, furthermore, to consider the strange silence of Jesus respecting all those alleged errors and discrepancies which so vex the souls of certain of our learned folk. Did he know that these blunders were to be found in the sacred pages? How is it that he uttered no words against the Mosaic cosmogony? How is it that he did not denounce those imprecatory Psalms which are "too horrible to be read" in some of our modern pulpits? How it is that he did not expose

the falsity of those prophecies concerning himself which have never been fulfilled and never can be because their time has gone by? Surely it is not too much to suppose that Jesus was an honest man. He seems to have been a fervent hater of shams and impostures, lying frontlets and phylacteries, false traditions of the elders and deceptions of every sort. Is it possible that his eyes were not so clear in this particular as those of our recent Biblical scholars? Or was his soul not so sensitive with regard to those dreadful things in Scripture? We are in a dilemma. Was he unscrupulous or merely ignorant? Must we put the most severe limitations upon his knowledge, assuming that he knew no better than to let these errors pass unchallenged, or must we impugn his ingenuousness? In either case we could scarcely receive him as our Saviour and spiritual guide.

We profess to be Christians. This means not simply that we trust in Jesus for our deliverance from the unquenchable fire, but that we follow him in all things. In every question of truth and conduct his decision must be supreme. His word makes an end of controversy for us. His Verily is our Court of Last Appeal. When, therefore, we have determined what he believed and taught about the Bible, that must conclusively and finally determine our opinion of it.

XXVI.

HEAVEN.

Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. Luke xxiii. 43.

Verily I say unto you, I shall no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. Mark xiv. 25.

Verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray. Matt. xviii. 13.

"*To-day.*"

The enemies of Jesus had nailed him to the cross; but they could not rob him of his power to save. His hands, pierced and bleeding, had not lost their cunning. He reached them forth in that last hour and plucked a penitent reprobate from the quicksands of shame and despair, in which he was sinking fast, and set his feet upon the everlasting rock!

But you "do not believe in death-bed conversions." No more do I. A man is a coward who will burn out the candle of his life and fling the sooty remnant on the altar. A man is a coward and deserves no mercy who will spend his years in sordid toil and selfish

pleasure and expect to leap into heaven at the last, with the cry "God, have mercy!" upon his lips. This is a dangerous venture. If I were you I would not try it. But God is sovereign and worketh when and where and how he will. Grace is free. Wesley never wrote a truer couplet than this,

> "Betwixt the saddle and the ground,
> Mercy sought, is mercy found."

It has been wisely said that one record of a death-bed conversion is given in the Scriptures, so that none may ever despair; but only one, so that none may ever presume. We may doubt all other death-bed conversions if it pleases us so, but as to this particular one there is no doubt whatever that the penitent thief was saved. We have the word of the Lord for it.

And Jesus said, "*Verily I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.*" (Luke xxiii. 43.) Blessed be God for that word "To-day"! No purgatory then. No hundred years of penance to burn out the record of the mislived past, and then the open gates. And no "soul sleeping"—a million years of resting in unconsciousness to awake at the trumpet sound and sweep in with the great multitude. No. "To-day" with Christ in Paradise. In the morning he was led out from the Damascus gate wearing at his neck the titulum, "He dies a thief." No friends to pity him; all say, "It served him right," and it did. But, perhaps, there was a home in Jerusalem filled

with sorrow for him—where an old mother sat rocking to and fro, her face in her hands, lamenting, "Woe is me for my wayward son. He dies a felon's death." She dared not lift her face and look toward Golgotha, for there was the gallows-tree. Her heart was crushed with unspeakable shame, yet filled with love; love maternal, love unconquerable, love which many waters cannot quench. But, O had she known! The garments of her woe would have been laid aside and joy would have brightened her dim eyes, had she heard the Master's words and known their meaning; for Jesus went before to Paradise and stood at the gate of the garden to welcome this penitent and believing sinner, saying, "Enter, beloved!"

At the Feast.

The Lord's Supper is a foretaste of heaven. As he sat at the table with his disciples he said, "*Verily I say unto you, I shall no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.* (Mark xiv. 25.) Here, as in many other places he likens heaven to a feast, at which he shall preside and his people shall be the happy guests. Of course we are to know him there, better than we have known him here; and this will be the very essence of our happiness. What would heaven be without him? "The Lamb is the light thereof."

But we are to know each other, also. This is im-

plied in the suggestion of a feast. Did you ever sit at table with a company where you were not acquainted with anybody but your host; and if so was it not a dismal affair? And shall we so look forward to the marriage feast whereat we are to celebrate the nuptials of the King's Son? Of that festive occasion the Lord said, "They shall come from the east and from the west and the north and the south and sit down with Abraham and Isaac in the kingdom." If the inhabitants are to know those ancient worthies, why shall they not also recognize others who are nearer and dearer?

A devout man, on being asked if he expected to know his favorite sister in the after-world, said that he expected to be so continually occupied with the beauty of the Bright and Morning Star that she might remain for ages by her side and he not notice her. In that reply there was a vast amount of ignorance if not of pious affectation. Is there any incompatibility between our love for the great Father and our love for our kinsfolk and friends? Is there any incongruity between the first and second of the great commandments? A man may love the Lord with all his soul and yet love his human associates with a pure heart fervently. Nay, more, the love of God is perfected in us only when we thus love one another. Our sanctified kinships and friendships are as eternal as the Father's love.

There is no Lethe between this world and the hereafter. There can be none, else our identity would

cease; for memory is the nexus binding the here with the hereafter. We shall walk together in the green pastures of Canaan and review the joys and sorrows of our earthly life. We shall sit at the table with Christ and our loved ones. A Danish poet tells of a glorified spirit who was sent to bring the soul of a little girl to heaven. While winging his way with his precious charge, the child saw a rose-tree in his hand and asked the meaning of it. The angel replied that once upon a time there was a poor lad in the city they had left who lay for a long while dying. That rose-tree was the one solace of his loneliness; it filled the sick chamber with its fragrance and spoke of the coming spring. And now, at his desire, the flower was to be transplanted to Paradise. Then the child looked up into the angel's face and asked:

> "'How knowest thou this, bright power?'
> Then splendidly he smiled:
> 'Should I not know my flower?
> I was that sickly child.'"

Ay, we shall remember there. The old home, the tree by the doorway, the well-sweep, the path leading through the meadow, the far-away sound of the school-bell—we remember them here, and in glory they will still abide with us.

The Joy of Heaven.

The joy of the Lord is in the finding of the lost. This is "the fruit of the travail of his soul." He

went forth to seek and to save, leaving the ninety and nine that he might answer the cry of the lost one on the mountains. And he sought until he found it.

> "Then all through the mountains thunder-riven,
> And up from the rocky steep,
> There rose a cry to the gates of heaven,
> Rejoice, I have found my sheep!
> And the angels echoed around the throne
> Rejoice, for the Lord brings back his own!"

He sits on his high place in heaven, while the multitude throng in through the open gates and break into singing, "Worthy art thou, for thou hast redeemed us!" and beholding in them the fruit of his travail he is satisfied. Is not this a joy worthy of the beloved Son? *Verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth over it more than over the ninety and nine which have not gone astray.* (Matt. xviii. 13.)

And the Lord will share his happiness with us. The celebration of the prodigal's return was a foregleam of heaven. The father called his neighbors to a feast. The lights were kindled and the table spread. There were sounds of music and dancing. All made merry together because the lost was found; and in that joyous company none was happier than the returned prodigal. As the guests moved to the table he would have taken the lowest place; but the seat of honor is given him. All doubts and misgivings are gone. The shoes of a freeman are on his feet and a ring of adoption on his hand. The father speaks,

"Neighbors, rejoice with me! This my son was lost and is found, he was dead and is alive again!" This is heaven. The Host and his guests participate in a common joy.

As Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress drew near to the Heavenly City, he saw the gates open to receive others. "I looked in after them," he says, "and, behold, the city shone like the sun; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many who had crowns on their heads and palms in their hands and golden harps to sing praises withal. There were also some that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord!' And after that they shut up the gates; which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them." If you also, my friend, wish to be among them, let the Lord carry you, as the shepherd carries the lost sheep on his shoulders, through the duties and responsibilities of life, up the steeps and over the rough places, through the gates into the home of God.

XXVII.

THE SECOND ADVENT.

Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. Matt. xxiv. 2.

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished. Matt. xxiv. 34.

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all things be accomplished. Luke xxi. 32.

Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through all the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be gone. Matt. x. 23.

Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom. Matt. xvi. 28.

In the teaching of Jesus as to his final coming there is a strange confusion of terms; strange, that is, to one who fails to consider that no prophecy is ever so definite as to dispense with the necessity of faith. The purpose of prophecy is not to gratify curiosity but to awaken expectancy and stimulate desire. To this end there must be concealment in the very process of revealing; so that the soul, awaiting the denouement with eagerness, yet meets it with surprise, crying, "How clear! And how could I ever have failed to perceive it?"

So it happens that the Biblical prophecies are frequently complex, two or more events being mingled

inextricably. In the Messianic Psalms, for example, there is oftentimes an immediate reference to David with a remoter one to "David's greater Son." The birth of Jesus was predicted in terms so minute and particular that we wonder how any could misunderstand; yet, prior to the incarnation, there was probably not one person on earth who perceived the wonderful truth in its real significance. The reason is obvious: these prophecies were designedly involved, paradoxical and enigmatic, leaving room for faith.

We should expect to find something of the same sort in the predictions of Christ as to his Second Coming. His so-called "parousia discourse," (Matt. xxiv. and xxv.) was addressed to his disciples in answer to three questions, namely, "When shall Jerusalem and the Temple be destroyed?" "When shall the kingdom be established on earth?" (signalized by "the end of the world," that is, of the present order of things) and "What shall be the sign of thy Coming?" In the discourse referred to these events are commingled and blended in a designedly confusing way. The truth of each event is emphasized with a Verily; but the complexity is such as to suggest that Christ intended us to pause far short of certainty as to details, leaving the times and seasons with God.

I. To us, who stand this side of the event, it is an easy matter to indicate and detach the references of Jesus as to the destruction of Jerusalem. Our pres-

ent purpose has to do only with such of his prophecies as bear the emphatic seal of the Verily. "And Jesus went out from the temple, and was going on his way; and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said unto them, See ye not all these things? *Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.*" (Matt. xxiv. 1, 2.)

A little further on in the same discourse the reference is made clearer still. "Now from the fig tree learn her parable: when her branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know ye that he is nigh, even at the doors. *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all these things be accomplished.*" (Matt. xxiv. 32–34.)

The details of the historic siege and overthrow of Jerusalem are given with more particularity in Luke xxiv., where the climax of the prediction is reached again in the parable of the shaken fig tree: "And he spake to them a parable: Behold the fig tree, and all the trees: when they now shoot forth, ye see it and know of your ownselves that the summer is now nigh. Even so ye also, when ye see these things coming to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh. *Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all things be accomplished.*" (Luke xxi.

29–32.) The retributive aspect of this event is dwelt upon in Luke xi. 47–51: "Woe unto you! for ye build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. So ye are witnesses and consent unto the works of your fathers; for they killed them, and ye build their tombs. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send unto them prophets and apostles: and some of them they shall kill and persecute; that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary: yea, I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation."

It is a true saying, Whatsoever a man soweth—aye, or a nation—that shall he also reap. The Jews who crucified Jesus cried with one accord "His blood be on us and on our children!" God took them at their word. The bolt of justice fell when Jerusalem was overthrown and they were scattered to the four winds. Centuries have passed and they are still a stigmatized race. A people without a fatherland, a nation without a government, a church without a temple, exiles and wanderers, their history is vibrant with that awful cry, "His blood be upon us!"

II. It is easy also to designate certain of the Verily predictions pointing to the coming of Christ's kingdom on earth. Two of these are as follows: "*But when they persecute you in this city flee into the next; for*

verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone through the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come." (Matt. x. 23.) This was uttered in connection with the sending out of the Twelve. Here "the Coming of the Son of man" means obviously the beginning of the great campaign of evangelization. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, with its ingathering of thousands, was the first notable triumph of Christianity. It was the trumpet blast that gave the signal for the advance through the ages. It occurred before the Twelve had finished their itinerary of Palestine; and it was the foregleam and prototype of spiritual victories which have attended the preaching of the gospel ever since and are destined to continue until the kingdom of Christ shall be universal.

The other passage referred to is in Matt. xvi. 27–28: "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render to every man according to his deeds. *Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*" Here again "the coming of the Son of man in his glory" has reference to a procession of events beginning within the lifetime of the apostles and having its consummation in the conquest of the world, this giving the final signal for the appearing of the King, whose glory shall then cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

III. To these Verilies must be added one other noted

prophetic utterance which bears obviously and immediately on the final advent of Jesus. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathered her own brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate and I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Luke xiii. 34–35.)* Here is a reference to the historic welcome to the Messiah. (Psalm cxviii. 25–26.)

But the Jews, of all nations, have been most reluctant to recognize Christ. The worst of the calamities that have befallen them is spiritual blindness. I was once greatly perplexed by a service which I attended in the great synagogue at Rotterdam. The place was thronged with worshippers. The lights were not burning except a candle here and there, just enough to make the darkness visible. The high priest chanted the service in a melancholy voice. I felt as if in a mummy crypt. What could this mean? All at once the character of the service changed. The lights in the great chandeliers were kindled; the worshippers produced tapers, lighted them, held them aloft; the priest had risen and was reciting in a gladsome voice, the men responding, "Hosanna! hosanna!" On inquiry

* It will be observed that the Verily of this passage in the Authorized Version does not appear in the Revision; but as the passage is so closely and appropriately related to the matter in hand it is worthy of citation, particularly as it bears the emphasis of "I say unto you."

afterwards I learned that this service was commemorative of the overthrow of Jerusalem and the captivity of its people. And the kindling of the lights meant that Messiah was to come. Oh, when will the hoodwink be taken from Israel's eyes? When shall they see that Jesus is the Christ?

The rejoicings of Palm Sunday are set forth as an earnest of the universal gladness which is to prevail at the Second Coming of Christ. But Palm Sunday is only one chapter of the story, as Jesus said, "Now this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet saying." To find what this prophet said we must go back five hundred years to the rebuilding of the Temple. A caravan made up of five thousand of the flower of Israel had been permitted to return from Babylon. At once they set to work, animated by the most patriotic and religious motives, to rebuild the temple. They had received contributions of about half a million of dollars in free-will offerings for this purpose. In Ziph, the blossom month, the work began in earnest; and it was continued for a period of some years despite many discouragements and the opposition of the surrounding tribes. Then their enthusiasm ceased; the fires upon the altar died out; the workmen longed to return to agricultural pursuit; the fields lay fallow in their sight; one by one they put aside the hammer and trowel and went forth to attend to their own affairs. The sanctuary was deserted; its bare walls

were open to the skies; the winds from the heights of Moab swept through its unlinteled doors; owls made their nests in its nooks and crannies; foxes from the ravine of Hinnom crept in and out its Holy Place; the outer precincts were filled with heaps of uncut stone and lumber. This was the condition of affairs when Zechariah came. He exhorted the men of Israel to return to their sacred task; he sought to rekindle their ardor by reciting a series of glowing visions through which walked in divine majesty their Messianic King. The climax of his exhortation was reached in this prophecy: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee; he is just and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass; and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth." (Zechariah ix. 9–10.)

Now link that event with this triumphal entry which occurred A. D. 30. It is the darkest hour in the history of Israel. The religion of the chosen people is much like the unfinished temple, and their government is trodden down by alien feet. The Man of Nazareth is on his way to Jerusalem. He has passed the night in Bethany, and at daybreak resumes his journey, staff in hand. His disciples are with him, and a company of pilgrims to the great annual feast. Not far from Bethphage he rests for a season, and sends two of his disciples for the beast of burden which is to carry him into the city. In the meantime it is

known in Jerusalem that Jesus of Nazareth is drawing near. The story of his preaching and miracles is on every lip. The people, encamped in leafy booths on the hillsides, see the caravan approaching on the heights overlooking the Kidron. They hear the shouting and commotion; they know what it means. They stream up the road, tearing off branches of the palm-trees; so the two companies meet; those going before joining with those that follow after in the cry, "Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David!" They wave the palm branches, they cast their garments in the road before him, and so escort him over the ford of the Kidron and on through the city gates. The people on the roofs and in their doorways see the procession passing by; traders and camel-drivers, and rabbis in robes embroidered with gold, all gaze with interest. Who is this? It is the carpenter of Nazareth, who claims to be the Messiah of God. On toward the temple moves the strange procession, crying, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

Now link that event with still another which is as yet behind the veil. It was seen by John the Evangelist before the Book was sealed; for the triumphal advent was itself a mere prophecy of John's vision. In that vision he saw the moon covered with a bloody veil; the stars fell as when a fig-tree is shaken of its untimely figs; the heavens were rolled up like a scroll; the earth was on fire; the hour struck; the spirits of

the dead came forth; angels and archangels crowded the expanse above. Armies! Armies! Armies! Palms in their hand and shouts of victory! Far as the eye can reach, angels and archangels and saints triumphant. Now the trumpet blast! The heavens are opened and the Son of man appears, robed in light and glory, and crowned with a diadem of stars; he lifts his hands in benediction, intercessory hands, marked with the scars of his mediatorial anguish. "Hosanna! Hosanna! to the Son of David! Worthy art thou to receive honor and glory and dominion and power for ever and ever!" The end has come; the tabernacle of God is among men. The prophecies are ended. Close the book and seal it. Jesus of Nazareth is universal king; his dominion is from sea to sea and from the river unto the ends of the earth.

But when shall these things be? "Take heed that no man lead you astray. And they shall say to you, Lo, there! Lo, here! go not away, nor follow after them: for as the lightning, when it lighteneth out of the one part under the heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall be the coming of the Son of man."

It is useless to busy ourselves with prophetic arithmetic. The key of Daniel's mystical figures hangs at God's girdle. And the question, "When comest thou?" is of far less importance than "What wilt thou have me to do?" Hear then the conclusion of the whole matter: "Watch! And again I say unto you,

Watch! For yet a very little while and he that cometh shall come and shall not tarry." A brave song was that of Charles Kingsley:

> "Who would sit down and sigh for a lost Age of Gold
> When the Lord of all ages is here?
> True hearts will leap up at the trumpet of God,
> And those who can suffer, can dare.
> Each old Age of Gold was an Iron Age too,
> And the meekest of saints can find stern work to do,
> In the *Day of the Lord at hand!*"

On the famous "dark day" in 1870 the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut in session at Hartford was greatly alarmed by the unaccountable veiling of the sun at high noon. A whisper passed among the legislators that this might possible be the end of the world. At this juncture Colonel Davenport arose and moved that candles be brought and that they proceed with the work in hand. "For," he said, "if this is indeed the end of the world, I am sure the Master can find us no better employed than in attending to our appointed tasks."

Here is the Master's word: "Let your loins be girded about—as for labor—and your lamps burning—as in vigil—and be ye yourselves like unto men looking for their lord; that, when he cometh and knocketh, at even or at midnight, or at cock-crowing or in the morning, they may straightway open unto him. Watch, therefore: for ye know not on what day your Lord cometh. He who testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus!"

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